


CLASSIC REPRINT SERIES

LIFE OF MOTHER MAGDALENE
DAEMEN, FOUNDRESS
OF THE CONGREGATION
OF THE FRANCISCAN
SISTERS OF PENANCE
AND CHRISTIAN CHARITY


by
Rev. W. J. Metz

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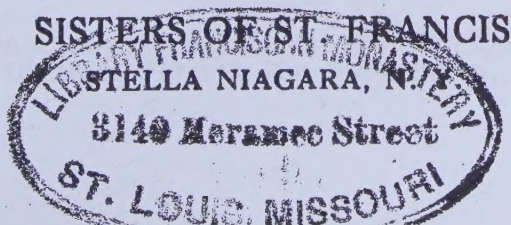
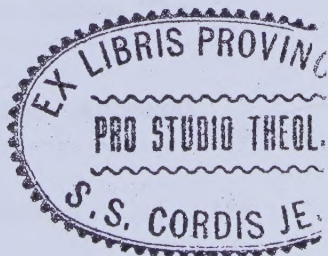
LIFE OF
Mother Magdalene Daemen, O. S. F.

Foundress of the Congregation
of the Franciscan Sisters of
Penance and Christian Charity

Based upon Sister M. Paula Munster's German Edition
"History of the Franciscan Sisters"

BY

REV. W. J. METZ, LL. B.



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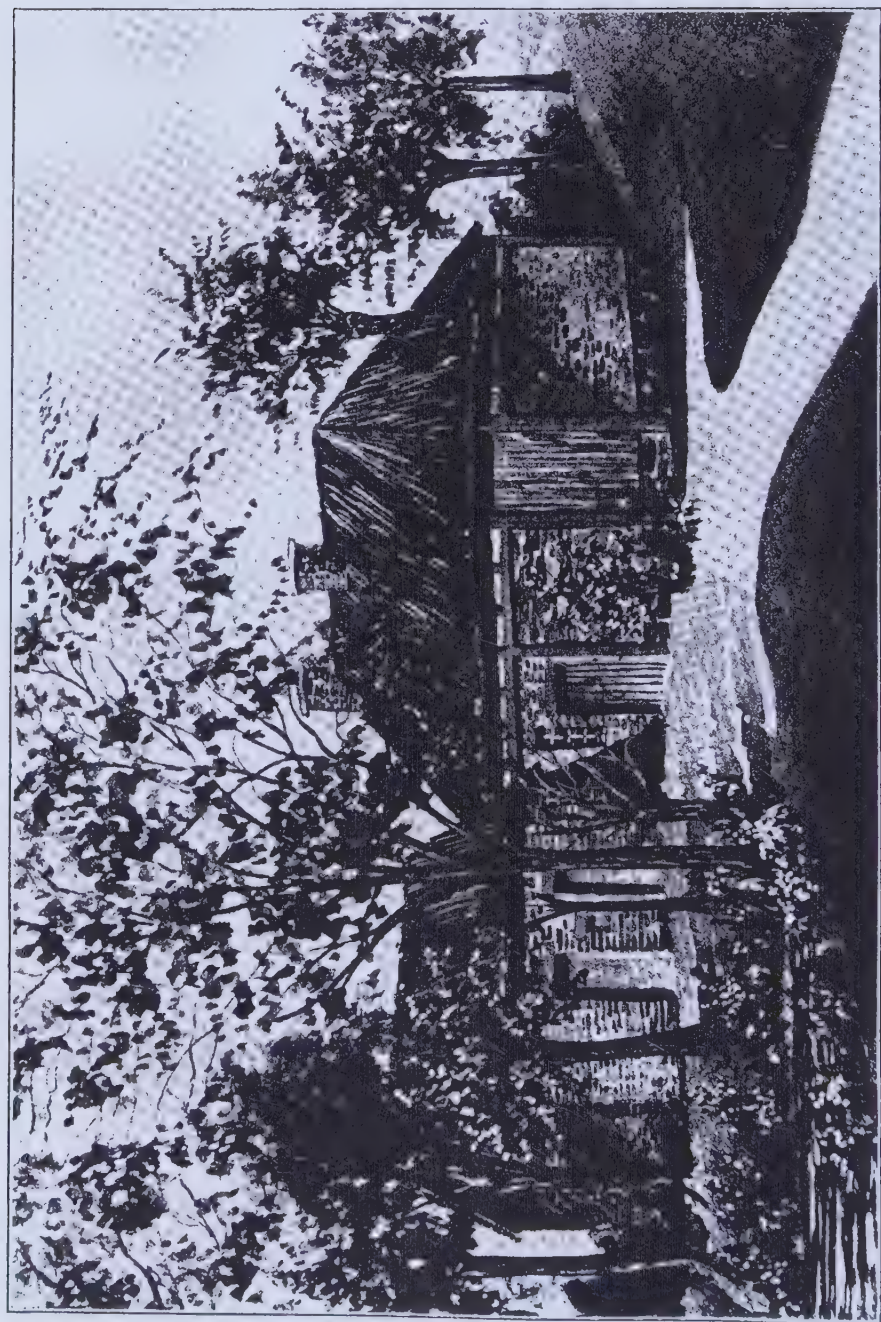
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Sisters of St. Francis

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DEDICATION

To all the **Daughters of Mother Magdalene**, especially those in the United States of America and in the English-speaking countries, this little volume is respectfully dedicated. May its perusal contribute to foster in their hearts the undying love their saintly foundress so well deserves, and to quicken in them the spirit of humble self-sacrifice for the spiritual welfare of souls.

THE COMPILER.

P R E F A C E

Unquestionably, no founder of a religious order in the Catholic Church followed the Crucified Savior's life of poverty and humble self-denial so closely as the Seraphic Saint—Francis of Assisi. In him we have a sublime model. He was in reality a direct opposition to all that the effeminate world craves and admires. We may say, God, in recompense, granted his spiritual sons and daughters renewed immortality in all ages. To-day his name is revered by non-Catholics as well as Catholics, and even in this age, despite the diminution of faith, reverence to the Poor Patriarch of Assisi expands; yea, his fame has rather increased than waned. His influence extends not merely to cloisters. It has invaded the homes of laity. Its beneficent sway has powerfully contributed towards the maintenance of the true faith and purest morals in every age. The congregations of women, professing the Rule of the Third Order of Saint Francis, today number about 55,000 Sisters. Wherever a foundation of the Seraphic Saint was established, its nucleus was engulfed in poverty and privation, and the achieved renown and victory followed upon self-denial and sacrifice on the altar of charity in the service of mankind.

I now present a glance into the inner life of a founder of one spiritual family governed in the spirit of Saint Francis of Assisi, Mother Magdalene. The reader will agree with me, after perusing the book, that judging from a human viewpoint, Almighty God,

could scarcely have chosen a more inapt instrument to accomplish His designs, but following the details of this short history, he will be forced to acknowledge, "Truly God's ways are wonderful, and He is most admirable in His Saints."

There is something charmingly attractive in the life of Mother Magdalene. She chose rather to obey than be obeyed, and she exercised the noblest virtue unobtrusively. With her, there was no nobility of birth or position, no bright, scholarly intellect nor acquirements to sway others to the will of a superior organizer, no combination of worldly riches to ward off misery and privation from the incipient organization, but the humble, illiterate virgin, striving for the advancement of her Master's glory, attracted others to His service by her example, and the candid, humble soul, pursuing the life of a true disciple of St. Francis, inundated by confidence in Divine Providence, has achieved victories.

In this biography, I have not written all that might be termed of a marvelous character, as well as all extraordinary events since her saintly death, so as not to intrude upon the verdict of the Church regarding her virtues. The reader will, no doubt, join me in the hopeful anticipation that in the not distant future, the world may learn to appreciate the humble servant of God—Mother Magdalene.

Uniontown, Wash.

Feast of the Stigmas of Saint Francis, 1912.

W. J. M.

CHAPTER I.

MOTHER MAGDALENE'S EARLY LIFE.

"I have loved thee with an everlasting love,
therefore have I attracted thee, taking pity
on thee." Jer. XXXI. 3.

Near the center of the Dutch Province of Limburg, where the River Maas or Meuse sends her sluggish, draining waters through fertile lowlands, lies the city of Stevensweert with its population of about fifteen thousand inhabitants. It is one of the important market places of the province for the disposal and exchange of the various agricultural products of the adjoining country. Northeastward from the city, the way leads through rich fields and pastures to the little village of Laek, an unimportant farming community, which in its eventless existence would be lost to history, had it not by the Providence of God, given to the Church one of its daughters, the luster of whose greatness immortalized its name.

On the 19th of November, 1787, a daughter was born to Cornelius Daemen, an unpretentious farmer of that place, and his wife Gertrude van Bree. Fear for her life induced the conscientious parents to convey their first-born to the parish church at Echt for baptism, the same day on which she was born. The little one received the name Mary Catherine, and the records show that her uncle, Christian van Bree, and her aunt, Mary Daemen, acted as sponsors on the occasion. The life of grace seems to have quickened her earthly existence.

From a human viewpoint, no one could have ventured to predict the delicate child's great future. Her

parents, though rich in Christian virtues, possessed but very modestly of the world's goods. In fact, the patrimony to be divided after their death between Catherine and her younger sister Jane was valued at not more than 2000 francs or about \$400. Their chief aim seems to have been to raise their children to useful labor, and to bequeath to them the greatest of all heritages, the value of faith and innocence in happy retirement.

The lives of the two children were passed in happy seclusion and rural simplicity. In temperament Catherine differed absolutely from Jane; Catherine was naturally of a retiring and shy disposition, while Jane was lively and gay. Nevertheless, Catherine always tried to join in her sister's pastimes. Their house with its adjoining fields and meadows was their paradise. Here they enjoyed their common hours of leisure. Together they roamed for hours over the lea, and admired the wonders of nature. Together, they watched the meadow lark rising heavenward with a song from its lowly hiding place in the grass; observed the songsters and chirpers in the trees and the spiders in their artful webs. Together they would return home, tired from their long ramble, decked with wild flowers of the fields or laden with berries for a frugal meal. Together, also, they shared the little privations of as modest a home as that of Cornelius Daemen. Both waxed healthy and strong of body while their minds remained innocent and pure, and their hearts grew accustomed to forego desires after superfluities.

Unfortunately, Catherine's mental training suffered both by the general educational condition of her time and by the political upheavals of that period.

Not until recent years was school attendance compulsory in Holland. The several towns and villages possessed a school house, it is true, and generally, also a teacher; but the parents were at liberty to send their children to his instructions. Hence, it frequently happened, especially during the summer season, that the teacher either had to talk to vacant benches or discharge his pupils at his discretion to perform necessary work on a small farm, which the community had assigned to him in place of a salary. Children of the poorer classes naturally remained often without any instruction. Religious knowledge was generally imparted to the little ones a few months previous to their First Communion. Catherine, in consequence, received but a rudimentary school education; but by her own energy and perseverance, she was not only able to read and write her own native Low Dutch language fluently, but also to instruct other children less fortunate than herself.

French revolutionary ideas of liberty had entered the confines of the Dutch Commonwealth as early as 1794, and for a time menaced by their violence the very existence of the Catholic Church in Holland. In 1795 the revolutionists victoriously declared the "Batavian Republic," which lasted until 1806, but to secure its own temporary stability, they were finally forced to restore civil and religious equality.

Catherine's First Communion occurred during the most violent period of these religious persecutions, when priests, who refused to subscribe to the constitutional oath recognizing the absolute supremacy of the Republic in all matters spiritual and temporal, were proscribed as traitors. She celebrated in strictest pri-

vacy this greatest of all days in the life of a Catholic child. Probably the circumstances attending it made its memory linger all the longer in her mind. It was the year 1801.

With her First Communion a more active life began for Catherine. Her mother relied more on her in the household, and her father required her assistance more frequently on the farm. Her gentle disposition made her ever ready to perform any task assigned to her. Without murmur or complaint she fulfilled quietly and earnestly her parents' every wish. Cornelius Daemen would have liked to see his older daughter a little more lively; and, as she would often relate in later years, he sometimes grew impatient at her old-fashioned and staid ways. "You, Catherine," he would exclaim, "are hardly fit for any work, you are always thinking and dreaming." The villagers also had their opinion about her, and did not fail to voice it "That girl thinks more of saying her prayers than of working." They did not mean to be unkind, nor were these words meant as a reproach, but as a comment on her pious and quiet disposition.

In God were centered all the thoughts of Catherine's innocent mind; and this contemplative character exercised a control over her to the end of her life. She never could wax eloquent, nor could she ever betray all the feelings of her lovely soul in well chosen words of flowery language. The working of God's grace within her and her constant communion with Him were rather manifested by her mild expressive look and the penetrating glance of her eyes, which attract us even in her picture.

CHAPTER II.

CATHERINE AT MAESEYCK.

She Joins the Third Order of St. Francis.

Harken, O daughter, and see and incline thy ear: and forget thy people and thy father's house." Ps. XLIV. 11.

We must open this chapter with an episode in Catherine's life which seems to be at variance with the character we ascribed to her. Bright little Jenny had grown to be a handsome young lady of nineteen. Gay and happy, though not frivolously disposed, she dearly loved diversions of all kinds; we may also add that being the younger of the two children she was more humored by her parents. One evening we meet both sisters arrayed in their best fineries on their way to a village dance. For Jenny, this was nothing extraordinary; but let not the reader raise his hands in horror at Catherine. It all happened in a most natural manner.

When Catherine had attained the age of sixteen she, like many of her companions in similar circumstances, had to leave her father's home and accept a servant's position. The small farm did not afford sufficient income, and Jane had advanced far enough in years to be of service at home. Catherine consequently accepted work in a Catholic family in the neighboring town of Maeseyck. Though this first parting from home affected her deeply, she quietly submitted to necessity, and suppressed the silent tears that stole into her eyes. She was, however, not without some consolation. At

Maeseyck, where a priest resided, she could oftener assist at the Holy Sacrifice, and visit the Blessed Sacrament more frequently than at Laek, which was fully three miles away from Echt, their parish church. Another source of happiness was, that she was now of more effective service to her loved parents, to whom she brought her small earnings with the utmost regularity. Maeseyck was only six miles distant from Laek, and Catherine hailed with joy the approach of the days when she could hasten to her parents' home.

It was during one of these visits that Jane importuned her, and by coaxing and entreaties succeeded in obtaining her sister's reluctant consent to accompany her to a dance. The conventional rules of good society in those days strictly prohibited young ladies going unattended to any public amusement or dance, and Jenny feared she would have to stay at home. Catherine would have greatly preferred to enjoy the company of her parents whom, in her opinion, she saw but too rarely. She pleaded her simple Sunday attire which was scarcely suited to such occasions; but Jenny had already provided for the emergency. She produced a brand-new apron for her sister's use, and thus arrayed, both sallied forth to the place of amusement. Again and again, Catherine begged her lively sister, whom she loved dearly, to desist and return home with her. It was in vain; self-willed Jenny must have her way, and however unwilling, Catherine must go along. How Catherine spent the hours of frolic in which she was too unskilled to participate, may be left to the judgment of the kind reader. When Mother Magdalene in later years related this important occurrence of her early life, she would add with a smile, "Once I went

to a dance in a red apron; just once, and never again." Such amusements possessed no attraction for the quiet and devout girl.

How long Catherine retained her humble position at Maeseyck is not known. Her daily life must certainly have varied but little till 1816, when she took the first step towards that long and useful career for which Divine Providence had so evidently destined her.

There existed at this time in Maeseyck an organization of women who followed the rules laid down for secular Tertiaries of St. Francis of Assisi. The members of this organization led a life of labor and prayer in common, under the direction of the pious Catherine Palenberg. The objects and aims of this society and their mode of living made so strong an impression upon Catherine Daemen, then thirty years of age, that she determined to join it. She applied humbly to the Superior for admission, and was overjoyed when her prayer was granted. On the 12th of November, 1817, she was permitted to pronounce her vows, and was duly received into the Third Order by the Very Rev. Eleutherius Meers, the guardian of the Capuchin monastery at Maeseyck.

The eight years following this great event of her life were truly a period of interior peace and happiness on which Mother Magdalene in after years frequently loved to dwell. It was interrupted only by the grief she felt at the demise of her beloved parents. Her father died on the 10th of May, 1820, and her mother on the 23rd of April, 1825. Both had found a good home with her sister Jane, who had meanwhile married Stephan Suilen.

These years of holy solitude and union with God were also the best preparation for a new life of untiring activity under the most trying circumstances, which we shall now briefly chronicle.

CHAPTER III.

HEITHUIZEN. FATHER VAN DER ZANDT.

The First Little House.

"The weak things of the world hath God chosen, that He may confound the strong." 1 Cor. I. 27.

About six miles to the northwest of Roermond, the traveler will find the prosperous village of Heithuizen, which, at the opening of our history, was unknown to the world, and ecclesiastically belonged to the diocese of Liege. The desolate waste or heath surrounding the spot where the hamlet stands was varied only by solitary shrubs and stunted trees, and had evidently given its name to the little farming community (Houses-on-the-Heath).

To-day Heithuizen is a very respectable village of more than one thousand inhabitants. It is grouped around the great convent of St. Elizabeth, the community's chief pride, to which it owes both its celebrity and its prosperity. This convent, dear reader, with its spacious buildings and its well kept grounds in the midst of flourishing agricultural lands is the immense achievement of the humble daughter of Cornelius Daemen of Laek, the servant of God, Mother Magdalene.

During the vacancy of the See of Liege, in 1821, Vicar-Capitular Barrett appointed Rev. Peter van der Zandt to the much neglected little parish of Heithuizen. The place offered at that time but small compensatory inducement and an immense reformatory task to the

young pastor. Though brusque in expressing his sentiments, he possessed all the qualities necessary for the work before him, a generous heart, energy of character and above all an indomitable zeal linked with prudence.

“The greatest need of my new and much neglected parish,” he writes in his chronicle, “is the proper education of the children and the young people, which constitutes necessarily the true foundation for a Christian life. From morning till night I can see the streets filled with children of all ages who pass the day in idleness, the greatest menace to good morals and virtue. If I could but gather them somewhere under the supervision of some pious soul! But what can I do? Where look for help? Where find a conscientious teacher?”

The good priest was evidently a great friend of children. “When he passed through the streets,” says an eye witness, “the little ones would flock to him and cling to his coat tails. He tried to amuse them, was interested in their games, and entertained them with many a little story.” With this kindly disposition towards the listless little street Arabs we can readily understand that he would have sacrificed himself for them, had his other pastoral duties permitted. Under the prevailing circumstances he could only recommend them to God’s care at the Holy Sacrifice and in his prayers till Divine Providence should intervene in their behalf.

On a par with the moral condition of his parish were the material wants of the church. It had only a few vestments of which some sadly needed, and others were beyond repair. He would gladly have replaced them

by new ones, but the necessary funds were lacking. In his distress, Father van der Zandt recalled the work of Catherine Palenberg and her community of Tertiaries at Maeseyck, with whom he had become acquainted while pursuing his studies in that town. To her he exposed his material wants; and from that unexpected but providential source was to come both material assistance and spiritual progress to Heithuizen.

The village on the heath was soon visited at regular intervals by members of Catherine Palenberg's community. Some of the old vestments were replaced, others repaired at those prolonged visitations. But a result far more important was to follow these charitable journeys. Little by little, Father van der Zandt exposed to his visitors his far greater anxiety, the moral reformation of the parish by a better care for the little ones. Though of themselves they could do nothing to relieve the deplorable situation, they communicated his troubles to their superior and encouraged him to place the matter before her, believing that she would most assuredly send the necessary help if at all within her power. An animated correspondence between Father van der Zandt and the superior was the consequence, with the happy result that Catherine Palenberg agreed to send two sisters of her community to live at Heithuizen and to work under the exclusive direction of the pastor. She granted his request all the more willingly, because he himself belonged to the Third Order of St. Francis, and would understand how to direct spiritually those whom she might place at his disposal.

Thus everything looked bright for Heithuizen and

the zealous pastor was already congratulating himself at the successful solution of his troubles, when unfortunately, circumstances arose which seemed to frustrate the execution of these generous promises, and to shatter his fondest hopes. On the 21st of June, 1825, not two, but one Tertiary made her appearance in the village; and this one was our Catherine Daemen. Father van der Zandt, thoroughly annoyed and dissatisfied, did not conceal his displeasure when she advanced to greet him. "I felt greatly angered," he confesses in his chronicle, "not only because the superior had agreed to send me two sisters, and to come herself to initiate them into their work here; but also, and mainly, because I judged Sister Catherine Daemen absolutely incapable to do the work required."

Father van der Zandt, who was, as stated, a very conscientious priest, could scarcely be blamed for entertaining such an opinion of the new arrival. There was nothing prepossessing in Catherine's exterior, nothing to command attention. Her personality did not impress one, nor did she inspire confidence in her ability. She submitted modestly to the stern scrutinizing look of his reverence, and humbly awaited his further pleasure. Her attitude nowise betrayed the firmness of her character, nor the utter confidence of her soul in Divine Providence.

Her entry into the village had indeed been most unobtrusive. She arrived in a canvas covered wagon which, according to an eye witness, held all her belongings, to-wit: a table, a chair, a small stove; all of which she had inherited at the death of her mother, and a box containing her wearing apparel.

Father van der Zandt did not dissimulate the dis-



FATHER VAN DER ZANDT.

dain he felt. A sentiment of pity and natural kindness alone prevented him from sending the evidently distressed Catherine away. Even the driver did not escape the Father's ill-humor. "Why did you bring her along? Why not leave her where she was? She is certainly a disappointment." What, indeed, was he to do with a person so manifestly "incapable to do the work required." He was in a quandary. Dejectedly he referred the case to his sister, who had charge of his domestic affairs. The result of their combined deliberations was, that the newcomer was to remain temporarily at the parsonage, and to take care of the church linen.

Poor, disappointed Catherine! How willingly she would have stayed with her companions in the quiet community at Maeseyck; and how generously had she offered God the sacrifice of parting from them, when obedience to her superior's wishes had called her to Heithuizen. She had certainly anticipated a different reception. She had come with all her earthly belongings, expecting that here would be her future home and the scene of her future labors; and now she was made to feel she was not wanted, and was told by the priest that she was unfit. She was fully aware that pity alone prompted him to retain her against his wishes, and that her temporary stay at his house and her momentary employment were but an act of charity.

Quietly she bore this severe test of her confidence in God. In truth, only a heart as profoundly penetrated by humility as hers, could have endured the probation as she did.

Uncomplainingly she went about her new duties. With a cheerful demeanor and a pleasant mien she

tried to perform her work to the satisfaction of the priest. If she felt her humiliation, no one knew it but God. She betrayed such sentiments neither by word nor deed. Father van der Zandt quite naturally under the circumstances watched her closely with wits sharpened by prejudice. But observe her as he would, his prejudices were not confirmed, and his inborn sense of justice asserted itself. He arrived, little by little, at the conclusion that bias had warped his judgment, and that under the very unassuming exterior of his seamstress there lived a soul ennobled by sterling virtue. Two qualities in her impressed him especially, her unwearied zeal and her steadfast confidence in God's providence. So complete was her abandonment to Divine Providence that she met all her difficulties and trials with her favorite expression, "God will provide." They manifestly showed the inmost sentiments of her childlike heart.

Catherine had remained about two months at the parsonage, when Father van der Zandt finally decided to try her ability in the work for which she had come to Heithuizen, the care of the children in the parish. For this purpose, he leased a small house near the church, which Catherine with the assistance of a hired girl prepared for its new purpose, as well as the scanty means allowed. Her confident heart was full of expectant joy. Both the priest and herself were anxious about the results.

The first school day arrived with every prospect of success. The opening of the new school surpassed Catherine's fondest hopes, and filled her heart with gratitude toward God. The little ones flocked to her, and day by day, additional scholars arrived. "God

seemed to bless her undertaking visibly," writes Father van der Zandt, "and my good people were ever ready to assist her."

Guided by the priest's wishes, Catherine instructed her charges in manual work and religion. In this she followed mainly the promptings of her own simple and pious mind. "Her efficiency," says Father van der Zandt, "lay chiefly in her own example." By her profound piety and her edifying conduct she attracted gradually not only the grown people, but also the hearts of her young charges.

The villagers were not blind to the beneficial result of her labors among their children; and hence the attendance of her school increased day by day. Like a mother she cared for her wards, especially for the children of the poor.

Her school was free to all, and the only material compensation she received for the exhaustive work was an occasional present of provisions or of other necessities. From God alone the pious servant of the poor expected the final and just reward for all her labors. To train these neglected children, whose home had been in the streets, to self-control and useful activity, required a daily life of untold heroic acts of self-denial and humility, which those for whom she labored were unable to appreciate fully.

Catherine felt no anxiety about her own livelihood. She was contented and happy when supplied with the barest necessities, and she committed the care for the morrow to Him whose Providence is over all His creatures.

CHAPTER IV.

GOD PROVIDES—OUR FOUNDERS.

"I desired, and understanding was given me; and I called upon God, and the spirit of wisdom came unto me." Wis. VII. 7.

Two years have passed, since the events narrated in the last chapter. They have been years of peace and happiness for the village on the heath. No longer were the people startled by the strident voices of boisterous boys and girls at play in the dingy streets. The lives of the mothers were no longer made up of continuous washdays. Father van der Zandt himself walked through the thoroughfares with a happy stride.

It is just four o'clock of a summer afternoon, and the children with gladness and mirth still peeping from the mischievous eyes of their contented faces, are walking demurely homeward. They greet their pastor with a happy smile, and in return he delights in watching their buoyant steps. "What a happy change," he mutters; "and it is all due to the wise management of good Sister Catherine. Poor girl, she is working too hard. I wish I could find some one to assist her "

Yes, dear reader, those children still have their games; they still enjoy their youthful frolic; but order has gradually entered into their lives. Nor are they afraid of their gentle taskmistress. Lovingly they gather around her in the primitive schoolhouse. Day by day, she regulates their hours of useful work and their moments of play and merriment.

But Catherine also feels the strain of her long continued efforts and her slightly varying hours among her daily charges. She foresees that her overtaxed strength must soon fail. Like her pastor she has prayed and trusts confidently that God will send assistance, and her childlike confidence in Divine Providence is about to be rewarded.

There lived at that time in Heithuizen a virtuous seamstress, who had intently watched Catherine's splendid work among the rising generation, and who was not a little attracted by the charm of her character. This woman God had chosen for his servant's first companion. Jane Anne Mary Verkolen was five years older than Catherine and very frail physically. She was incapable of strenuous work, but she said to herself: "If I can do nothing more than take the children for their manual training, Sister Catherine will be more at leisure to teach religion successfully." She immediately began to cultivate her friendship more earnestly; and when she finally communicated her desire to Catherine, the latter was overwhelmed with happiness. "Oh, yes," she exclaimed, "indeed, you must come. God is sending you to me." This was the first ray of sunshine breaking through Catherine's isolated condition, she was no longer alone.

The school work was now resumed with renewed energy. At first the sisters concentrated their combined efforts exclusively upon the work so successfully launched. Soon, however, a new field not less necessary, but still then unknown in Heithuizen, was added. It was the care of the poor and the sick in the village. To this work all their spare hours were devoted. From house to house they went on their errands of charity.

What they received from the rich they distributed to the poor, and left a word of cheer in the different homes. The names of Sister Catherine and Anne, as they were fondly called, soon grew familiar to all, and many a secret prayer rose to the throne of God from the lips of the distressed and ailing, imploring His blessing upon their labors. Unselfishly, they thus took care of God's neglected poor without any thought of their own wants; and often when returning home at night with a heavy bundle destined for their clients they found their little house cold, cheerless and without much food for themselves. Yet, strange to say, neither succumbed to the hardships, so inseparable from their lowly service, which would have broken down sturdier natures, but even Sister Anne grew daily stronger and more efficient.

The year 1828 opened very auspiciously for our apostles of charity. During the first six months they were re-enforced by two new candidates in the persons of Gertrude Kirkels and Mary Catherine Deckers.

Gertrude Kirkels was little more than two years younger than Sister Catherine Daemen. She was born at Wessen on the 4th of March, 1790, and had passed through numerous trials of a long widowhood. The premature death of her husband had forced her to accept a servant's position in order to sustain the lives of her little child and her aged mother. Nor had her condition as a servant been an enviable one. It was that of a cattle herder. From early morning till late at night her days had been filled with the most strenuous labor; and to save what she could for her loved ones she had often contented herself with the scantiest food. For their sake, she had uncomplainingly

borne for years the hardships of her servile condition ; and love for them had inspired her with a courage almost superhuman. God had at last intervened in Gertrude's behalf by calling to Himself both her child and her mother.

She was now alone in the world, and naturally felt her isolation severely. But this, her forlorn condition, together with her experiences in suffering and trials, were the means God employed to give a new direction to her aimless life. By them He gradually drew her to Himself. Without her daily care for the departed loved ones and without any anxiety regarding her own future, she wandered now every morning to the village church of Heithuizen, and in fervent prayer commended herself to the great Father of widows and orphans. She always found the greatest peace for her wounded heart near Him who has promised to be the consolation of those "who labor and are burdened." Here God directed Gertrude's attention to Catherine Daemen and her companion, who prepared every morning, by Holy Communion and ardent prayer, for their mission of charity. Their fervor and piety gradually attracted her lonesome heart ; and when God in His own mysterious manner, finally kindled, the desire to embrace their unselfish life, she was ready to respond to the call.

Accordingly, she one day directed her steps towards the parsonage to consult her spiritual guide, Father van der Zandt, expecting from him a word of fatherly advice and encouragement. But his Reverence, far from encouraging, met her pious resolve in his own brusque way with a very impatient retort, "put that out of your head ! That is nothing for you. Go, and

remain in the world, and attend to your herds as you have always done!" The priest evidently thought she was not fit for the company of his saintly charity workers. Crestfallen Gertrude walked away from the presence of her stern pastor without, however, abandoning all hope. She determined to approach Catherine herself.

One day after Mass, she studiously managed to leave the church at the same time as the two sisters. Modestly she stopped near the door, and offered the holy water to Catherine with the very fixed resolve to expose her heart's desire to her and receive the final verdict. "Catherine," she faltered, "how happy are both of you to live only for God and your pious work. How much would I love to join you, if you could only use me. But you see I have neither knowledge nor education, neither money nor earthly goods. I have only my ability to work and nothing more to offer you. Perhaps I could do your housework whilst you are busy elsewhere, and I would willingly do it. And you don't need to worry about my maintenance: a piece of dry bread and a little water will do me. Nor will I take up much room: any little corner will suit me. I am sure you will never find me dissatisfied. Do you think you could take me?"

Patiently, had Catherine listened to Gertrude's request while her mild gaze seemed to search her client's inmost soul. And when the humble shepherdess had finished speaking, a smile of touching gladness appeared in Catherine's countenance while she answered. "My little house is open to you, Gertrude, and you are perfectly welcome. God bless your coming! He has sent you to me because He knows I need

your help." Full of gratitude, Gertrude immediately transferred her few belongings to the little house, and became one of Catherine Daemen's family. She had one slight advantage over Anne Verkolen, in as much as she possessed a rudimentary knowledge of reading and writing. But those who were acquainted with her in later years, do not seem to have had a great opinion of her proficiency in these arts; in fact, they aver that "she preferred to weed a whole garden than write a single page of a letter."

The other applicant, Mary Deckers, was born at Hunsel on the 13th of May, 1804, and consequently, not quite 24 years old when she sought admission into the little community. Her early life resembled that of Catherine Daemen in as much as she also had to work for strangers in order to assist her parents. She was, at this time, in the employ of a rich farmer some miles from Heithuizen. Though naturally of a pious disposition, carefully fostered by her conscientious mother, she possessed a no less vivacious temperament, and, without experience of the ups and downs of life, she looked into the future with happy unconcern. She readily enjoyed innocent diversions; but was no less attracted by the Eucharistic Savior in whose presence she spent many a leisure hour.

Her attraction to Sister Catherine's cause came rather suddenly, and was the effect, on her impressionable mind, of a sermon on the instability of human happiness. "Why do you spend money for that which is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy you? Incline your ear and come unto me, and your soul shall live." (Is. IV. 2.) The preacher's solemn arraignment of the world in its insane quest of tran-

sitory, earthly pleasures had deeply affected her. Full of serious thoughts she returned home where her unusual gravity did not fail to attract attention. Demurely she went about her evening duties, and, quite contrary to her ordinary lively nature, she did not even seem to notice the gayety of the farmer's daughter who was devotedly attached to her. Mary's conduct was so strikingly solemn that it appealed to the latter's girlish sympathy. "What is the matter with you, Mary?" she inquired affectionately as soon as the work was done. "Why are you so quiet? Is there anything wrong?" Poor Mary Catherine was almost startled out of her reverie by the question. She was too sincere to conceal anything from her youthful friend. "Oh," she answered with a sigh, "I wish there still were convents! If there were," she continued musingly, "I would this very day renounce the world, and serve my God alone."

A peal of girlish laughter greeted the announcement. Soon everybody in the house knew of it, and there was a general, genuine surprise that a jolly girl like Mary intended to become a nun. While some received the news incredulously, others, made her the target of their inane wits and merry jests. But their raillery, far from influencing her decision, made her only more determined. She only regretted her candor and confided thereafter her secrets to God alone. To Him she submitted in fervent prayer her perplexing doubts, and from Him she hoped enlightenment and guidance.

Quite accidentally, she one day overheard a conversation about Heithuizen and the three charity workers at that place. The dialogue was interesting to Mary,

and she listened more intently. The self-abnegation and pious spirit of the little village community was highly commended, and regret expressed that there were not more places with such self-sacrificing noble women. The conversation proved an inspiration. "Well, well," the poor girl mused, "I'll have to go there and see." On the following Sunday she asked for, and obtained permission to visit Huithuizen, where she had an aunt living. She wanted to ascertain from her the truth concerning the little religious community without letting her fellow servants suspect her action. But not even to her aunt who paid an enthusiastic tribute to the three apostles of the poor did she reveal her secret. Unobserved she directed her steps towards the little convent. Gertrude Kirkels answered the call, and, upon inquiry, informed her kindly that Sister Catherine had just gone to visit a poor patient. She was directed into a small and clean, though poorly furnished, little parlor, and asked to await her return. Unfortunately, such was impossible under the circumstances, because Mary had to be at home before evening. She left with a promise to return. It was a bleak Sunday afternoon in November, 1827.

Five months had come and gone, yet Mary could not make up her mind to knock a second time at the convent door. One night she had a terrible dream in which Our Blessed Lord appeared to her, and, with an angry countenance, addressed her with these words: "See here the glories of Heaven, yonder the fires of Hell; depart from me into these flames because you have not been faithful to your vocation." Filled with fear, Mary cried out: "Have patience with me! Oh Lord, be merciful to me and forgive me, I surely will

go now!" When she awoke, she went immediately to obtain permission from her mistress, and was soon on her way to the village on the heath and to Catherine's little house. Once more she was admitted and again was informed of the sister's absence on an errand of charity. But this time Mary awaited her return. Some anxious hours of expectation elapsed, and her heart beat high, when at last Catherine with a kindly smile entered the little parlor. We shall not attempt to describe the extreme cordiality of the interview, which was marked by an absolute frankness on the one side and a friendliness akin to affection on the other. God alone witnessed the touching scene. "Very well, Mary," concluded the superior, more deeply touched than she could show, "we will try and serve God together." Tears of joy were trickling down Mary's cheeks. "I thank you with all my heart," she faltered, "I will soon be with you." A few more weeks elapsed, weeks of leave-taking from parents, brothers, sisters and friends, and then Catherine's narrow home counted another inmate. Sister Anne was especially delighted. Mary, in spite of the rough work she had been compelled to perform, was well skilled with the needle, and it required but little instruction to make her a very efficient help.

"And continuing daily in the temple with one accord, and breaking bread from house to house, they took their meat with gladness and simplicity of heart." (Acts II. 46.) These words, therefore, may be truly applied to Catherine's small home and its inmates. They lived like sisters, happy, and in harmony, in their voluntary poverty. Catherine and Anne instructed the children, Gertrude had charge of the household

and Mary was assigned to church work. Not only were clothes fitted for the indigent, and vestments repaired; sewing was now likewise accepted from the people and new vestments made for the neighboring churches. The little Home was a veritable paradise where communion with God interrupted the hours of labor.

Nor were the poor and sick of the village in any way neglected. Gertrude and Mary often spent entire weeks in their service, when their continued ministrations were required. God alone knows the sacrifices brought and the privations endured, while nursing the sick back to health or comforting the dying. The poor people especially, could offer neither bed nor strengthening food, and the attending sister generally had to be contented to take her short hours of rest on a spread of straw near the bedside of the sufferer. Yet they were satisfied and happy. Nay, the very sacrifices they brought seemed to increase their interior peace and outward happiness.

Such were the four pillars on which Divine Providence had decreed to erect the great structure of a future congregation. They were four humble souls who with childlike confidence trusted in God and were, by trials, shaped into befitting cornerstones, that His power might be made manifest to men.

CHAPTER V.

A SELF-CONSTRUCTED HOME.

“Thou, O Lord, hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in their distress.” (Is. XXV. 4.)

When the average sightseer views the numerous clusters of stately buildings, like feudal castles of old looking from the hillside upon fertile valleys and picturesque landscapes; when he sees them dotting the rugged sea coasts like landmarks for the guidance of the mariner, there comes a look of wonder on his face upon being informed that these imposing structures were erected by religious orders for educational and charitable purposes. Furthermore, when one thinks of the members of these orders who, happily secluded behind the cloistered walls, live lives of direst poverty, the wonder is increased, not only on account of the Catholic spirit which prompted such benevolence, but also because one cannot conceive how these glories of the hillside and these attractions of our verdant plains were financed. Whence did their wealth accrue? While the socialist and anarchist, with no higher ideals of life than its transitory pleasures, curses the money thus seemingly inoperative in the possession of the “dead hand” and terms such buildings a spoliation of the people, classifying religious orders with predatory millionaires; the Christian philanthropist with more truth ascribes the possibility of such edifices to the very spirit of self-sacrifice of their occupants, who generously donate their life and their work for the

betterment of their fellowmen and for the relief of their ailments. We, as Catholics, however, must confess that to God's Providence alone is attributed all that has been, and is still achieved by our religious orders; and above the entrance of each and all their stately structures we might place the words: "A Domino factum est istud et est mirabile in oculis nostris." "The Lord has done this, and it is wonderful in our eyes."

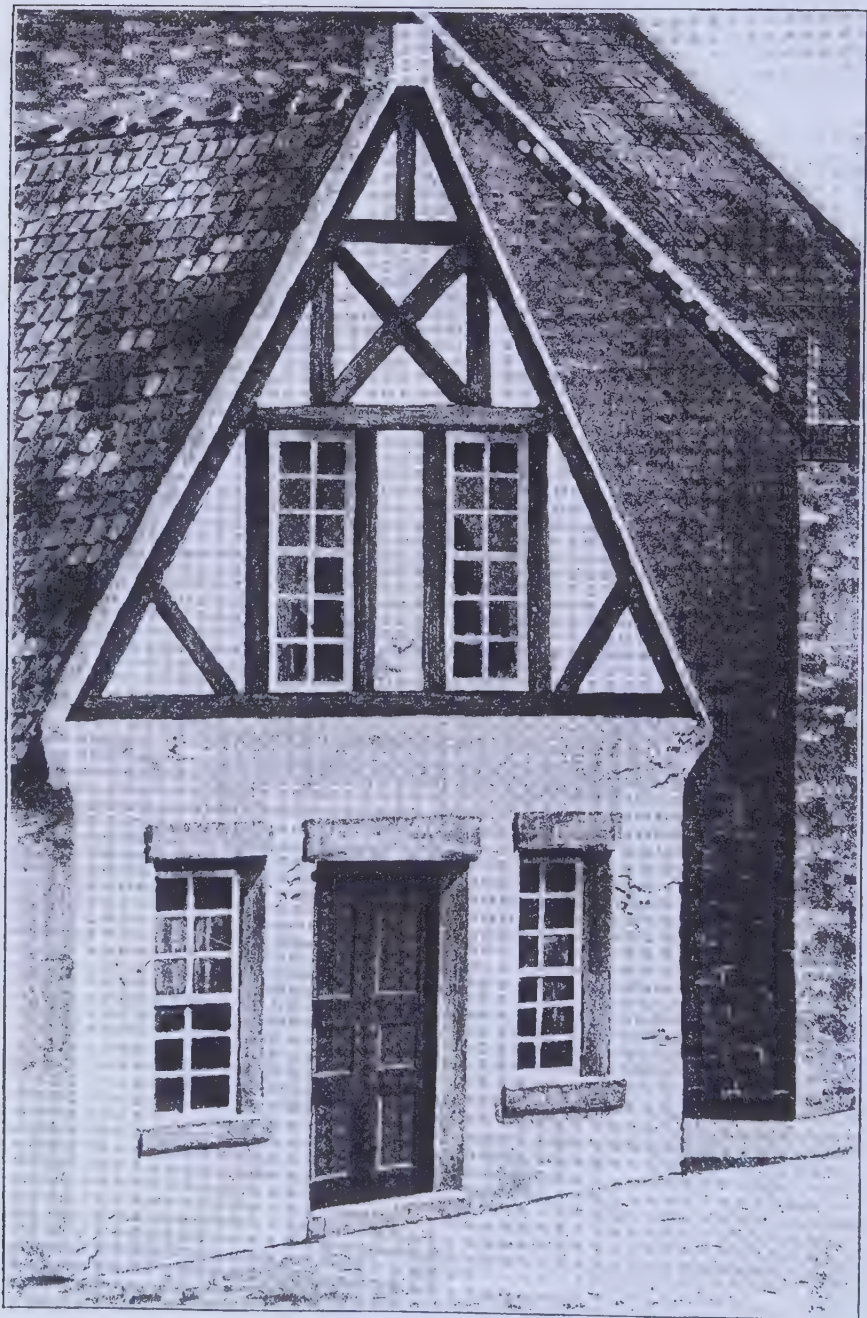
With these preliminary thoughts in our minds let us approach Heithuizen in the year 1828, and live through a short chapter of incipient convent history which will remove forever the envious look from many a covetous eye.

Poverty reigned supreme in Catherine Daemen's small establishment, and a good conscience was often the only comfort of its inmates, when after a wearisome day and a scanty evening meal they sought their rest on a pallet of straw. Yet, all would have been well in the midst of that indigence had not a most serious financial problem preoccupied the mind of its superior. The number of pupils had steadily increased with every succeeding school term, and the question of housing them stared her in the face. While she reflected earnestly on a conceived plan affording relief, she trusted at the same time that God would intervene in favor of her young charges.

Not far from the church and almost in the center of the little village stood an abandoned, dilapidated house, which for some time had attracted her attention. The crumbling structure itself was practically useless, but the site suited her purposes. She thought a new, cheap building on that spot would indefinitely

relieve the most pressing needs. Father van der Zandt, to whom she always referred her plans, approved of the scheme. The sole, and naturally, the most vexing question remained how to finance the undertaking. Nor was much gained by a common deliberation of the little community which served only to show their absolute poverty. Catherine Daemen's patrimony amounted to about \$200; Anne Mary Verkölen during her years of labor, had saved nearly \$150, but the widow Gertrude Kirkels and Mary Catherine Deckers had brought almost nothing at their admission. With their combined wealth on hand they were just able to purchase the property, but what were they to do thereafter? Sister Catherine concluded the meeting with her usual simple words: "God will provide." Indeed, her confidence in Divine Providence was so firm that she immediately acquired the property, and had the old house torn down, leaving the reconstruction of a new and more suitable edifice to God.

And now we must introduce the gentle reader to a scene, as unusual as touching, to show the heroism of which these women were capable in the interest of their noble cause. Lack of the necessary funds inspired them to perform deeds of the hardest servile toil. Surrounded by a passing crowd of wondering villagers, they slave day by day, whenever their school-work and their charitable appointments permit, in the midst of the debris. Carefully they assort the useful lumber and stones from the rubbish, which they remove or burn. Tirelessly, they continue this work for weeks till the building ground is cleared, and the excavation made for the foundation. Gertrude and Mary, strong of hand and robust of health, are es-



THE FIRST CONVENT.
(Constructed by Sisters themselves.)

pecially in demand. Night by night, they return dust-laden to the humble home, and seek by a frugal meal and some hours of slumber to recuperate strength for the following day. The preliminary work completed, they mix the mortar and then bed the first stones in the foundation of the new building, of which Sister Catherine is the actively supervising architect. Little by little, the villagers also grow interested in the labor done for their children's sake; the energy shown by these industrious women grows infectious. Soon men volunteer their services, and under their powerful, skilled hands stone rises upon stone, and timber upon timber, till a solid roof surmounts the one-story house which contains in addition to two small living rooms for the Sisters, two large rooms for the children. The feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin marked the end of their extraordinary labors; and the dedication of the lowly structure could take place during the following week. General joy reigned in Catherine's home at its completion. The disinterested builders had, however, overlooked one serious defect; while the building afforded ample space for their wards it bettered by no means their own condition. A small kitchen and a diminutive sitting room were to shelter them day by day; four narrow cells in the garret, each containing a spread of straw, were to provide for their rest at night. Yet, they were happy as kings, because it was their own, self-constructed home. The primitive dwelling is still standing and has been reverently preserved. Today it houses a little printing establishment.

The indigence of the four women in their new building is tersely described in Father van der Zandt's

chronicle. "In their new home," he says, "the sisters led a very austere and a very poor life. Their chief support came from spinning and sewing; an occasional gift being added by some of the pupils' parents. Three times a week they approached the Holy Table, and greatly edified my people by their pious attendance at Mass every day. Faithfully they nursed the sick and proved a constant comfort to all in distress. Everybody, therefore, had a good word for them; and the sentence from Judith (VIII. 8) may be truthfully applied to them: "Nec erat qui loqueretur de illis verbum malum; 'there was no one to speak evil of them'."

The 9th of November, 1828, was especially a happy day for Catherine and her associates. After a long and careful preparation for the event, they had all betaken themselves to Maeseyck, where her three companions made, on that day, their profession as secular Tertiaries of St. Francis before Father Leonard van den Poell, O.F.^pM.C., who had secretly escaped the religious persecutions of the Dutch government.

To understand better the straitened condition of our heroines of the poor, we shall cite verbatim the very interesting reports of Gertrude Kirkels, later Sister Mary Anthony.

"Our school produced but little towards our livelihood, because we had to accept most of our children gratuitously. When we moved into our new house our whole furniture consisted of a small stove, and, for reasons of economy, that was kept burning only as long as necessary to prepare our scanty meals. We sat down on the bare floor to partake of our meager pittance; and sometimes the reversed washtub, which

served as a common wash basin in the morning, was used as a table. Nor were our nights more comfortable than our days. The spreads of straw in the corners of our sleeping cells, without a cover of any kind, afforded but a poor protection against the inclemency of the weather. We had no means to check the cold night winds whose doleful moanings in the rafters sang us to sleep. Mary especially suffered from the cold. More than once in winter, she went so far as to leave the house quietly and wade through the snow in order to restore her benumbed circulation."

"Sometimes we had to sew and work all night to earn something. Gradually, we were thus enabled to purchase the bare necessities of life; some lesser articles being donated us by the good villagers. Year in and year out, we had nothing for our breakfast but black coffee. At noon and at night, we welcomed whatever the people might bring us, and that was but little. We never expended a single penny for meat. And yet, we were satisfied in spite of all this poverty. Nay, Sister Catherine seemed at times even overwhelmed with gratitude. 'How good God is after all,' she would say, 'He increases our contentedness with our poverty.' Indeed, we felt happier with all the poverty of our Franciscan table than many a rich man in the midst of his viands."

Mary alone, who had, as we have seen, so readily and bravely embraced this penitential life, gradually began to succumb to its hardships and privations. Her ever buoyant spirit and generous nature were always prepared to undertake the more difficult tasks; and hence upon her, this half-starved existence had a most

disastrous effect. She grew disheartened; and finally a time came when she deemed such a life bitter beyond endurance. "Nothing but hard work," she mused," nothing but fasting, without any relaxation, without any pleasure! And this existence is to drag on till death ends it. No, O my God, you cannot demand this of me! I cannot bear even the thought of it!" How much easier had her life in the world been. With her strength, diligence and ability could she not obtain a position anywhere? Moreover, could she not lead a devout life and save her soul in the world, instead of suffering daily this unbearable martyrdom? No, no, she could stay here no longer!

Thus Mary meditated while she sat alone in her cell on her humble bed of straw. It was the evening hour, after a hard day's work, and her companions had already retired to take a much needed rest. But no sleep came to her wearied eyelids in this hour of mental anguish, the most crucial hour of her life, as she herself confessed in later years. Some secret power, which she recognized as evil, seemed to urge her away from Catherine's home. Tears flowed fast from her wakeful eyes; but they were not tears of happiness, such as she had once shed when applying to Catherine for admission; they were tears revealing, not assuaging, her agonizing heart. In her mental torture she had recourse to fervent prayer for Divine help, and then by a revulsion of feelings she became again a victim of her despair in such forlorn condition.

But hush! A door creaks. Mary listens intently, and peers into the darkness. It is the door of her own cell! A figure quietly approaches the startled girl. A hand rests softly on hers, and "Mary dear, what is

the matter?'' a familiar voice kindly whispers. "O Catherine, Catherine!" she faintly answers with a sob, "I am so glad you have come. I am so unhappy!" Yes, the intruder had fortunately and timely disturbed the disastrous train of her thoughts. With loving sympathy Catherine sat down beside the suffering girl, and listened to the outpourings of her troubled soul. Little by little the combat subsided. Mary's tears still flowed, it is true, but they were now the indicators of peace. When Catherine finally left her with a motherly "Good night" and went back to her own cell, Mary lay down to rest on her pallet like a weary child. On the following morning nothing in her cheerful demeanor indicated the terrible storm of the preceding night, which only God, her guardian angel and Catherine had witnessed.

How the latter's timely interference at the most critical moment may be explained, whether she had defined Mary's state of mind from her altered looks or unusual conduct, must be left to the penetration of the kind reader, who, however, will admit that her appearance at that nightly hour was providential. She certainly had saved Mary's vocation.

A happy peace reigned again in Catherine's home, and under its protection days waxed quietly into months, and months lengthened into years. For seven long years did the sisters endure their indigence. How Catherine kept alive contentment and courage in her companions despite their want, is briefly related by Sister Crescentia, who joined their number about that time. "Catherine," she says, "spoke often to us of the happiness of convent life, and it was indeed a great comfort to us at that time when the Netherlands

were without cloisters of any kind to realize that ours resembled the life of convents so closely."

The sisters loved Catherine dearly. Though naturally somewhat taciturn she attracted them powerfully by her exemplary piety and her sincere conduct. "She never said much," reports Sister Pacifica, another of her companions, "and only at important moments did she open her lips. But whenever she did speak her few sentences were full of meaning. If a sister came to her with some difficulty or some disagreeable experience encountered, she would say with a winning smile. "Have confidence, my child!" or "Trust in God, and it will all end well!" On other, similar occasions, she would remark: "My child, just make a good intention; I'll begin a novena for you," or "I'll offer up a Holy Communion for you." Her favorite exhortation to all was: "Let us live as true children of St. Francis, and in His own good time God will provide for us."

Who can read this chapter without acknowledging that Divine Providence must finally reward such heroic confidence and such sacrifices, and ultimately crown with success, efforts so unselfish and so generous.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PURCHASE OF THE "KREPPPEL."

First Steps to Secure the Ordinary's Consent for a Convent.

"If this work be of man, it will fall to nothing; but if it be of God, you cannot destroy it." (Acts V. 38, 39.)

Have you ever noted a thunderstorm in its futile attempt to defeat the brightness of a summer day? How the tranquil air gradually grows sultry and the sun in mockery at the approaching storm pours more defiantly its hottest rays upon the parched soil? On the horizon a dark cloud appears, and soon another and another, all harbingers of the coming onslaught, till at last the whole sky seems but a vast battlefield of menacing clouds, discharging here and there their hostile shafts. The heat has grown oppressive, the sun has disappeared under the denseness of that impassable array, whose victory now seems complete, and an enforced twilight reigns. Fitful gusts of wind have heralded the approach of the battle of the skies, and intermittent flashes with hollow peals of rolling thunder tell of the strength of the advancing hosts. Suddenly a dazzling flash and clap and heavy drops of rain betray the closeness of the combat. Carefully both men and animals seek safety; the birds themselves are hid in silence. The storm now rages on destruction bent in all its fury. Its pathway is soon strewn with leaves, and lifeless branches and other articles are whirled along the streets and highways. Slowly the aerial riot passes on its course, the peals

diminish in intensity and become more distant, the flashes grow less frequent and less dazzling, till by degrees the daylight reappears; and the sun smiles down in brighter glory.

Not unlike such aerial rebellions have been the persecutions against the Catholic Church. There is to-day no land unmarked by one or more storms against her existence; it was the legacy of Christ that such should be: "If they have persecuted me they will also persecute you. Yea, the hour cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doth a service to God" (John XV. 20, XVI. 2). History records the passage of each storm, and shows the wreckage caused by arrogant reformers, and her various foes in their giant efforts to obscure the light. But each and all of such paroxysms of rage against her were only so many heralds of the display of her supernatural vital strength. For a while the turbulent elements seemed to have clouded the power of the Divinity itself, but when, at God's command, the fury of each storm was broken, leaving useless wreckage in its wake, the Church reappeared with a new radiance and a rejuvenated splendor which her foes must confess they had themselves reluctantly and unwittingly helped to enhance.

A severe religious persecution against the Catholic Church raged with intermittent fury in Holland during the first two decades of the last century. It had been prefaced by the sanguinary French revolution, and spread little by little northward across the confines of the Netherlands, where it found a willing abettor in William I. of Orange after his accession in 1815. He was a fanatical Calvinist, and in his methods an

apt pupil of Freemason B. Goubau of Brussels. For thirty years the Netherlands were in the throes of the storm, and not before 1827 when a determined people forced its ruler into a concordate with Rome, did it abate. Great was the havoc wrought during that long period, and had not the staunch and self-sacrificing spirit of the quasi-disfranchised Dutch Catholics asserted itself, it is difficult at this time to conceive the final outcome of the conflict. Owing to their quiet and determined resistance, rooted deeply in the faith of their fathers, the storm passed; and as soon as the calm returned, convents and cloisters rose from their ruins, new ones were added to their numbers, and Catholic life resumed its activity. The Church beamed forth once more through the disappearing clouds; but not until the accession of William II, in 1840, was calm restored. To-day nearly one-half of Holland's population is Catholic, and to emphasize still more the guidance of Divine Providence, the land afforded during Bismarck's era of persecution a haven for many proscribed German bishops and priests.

The improvement of religious conditions in Holland wrought an absolute change in Catherine Daemen's life and future.

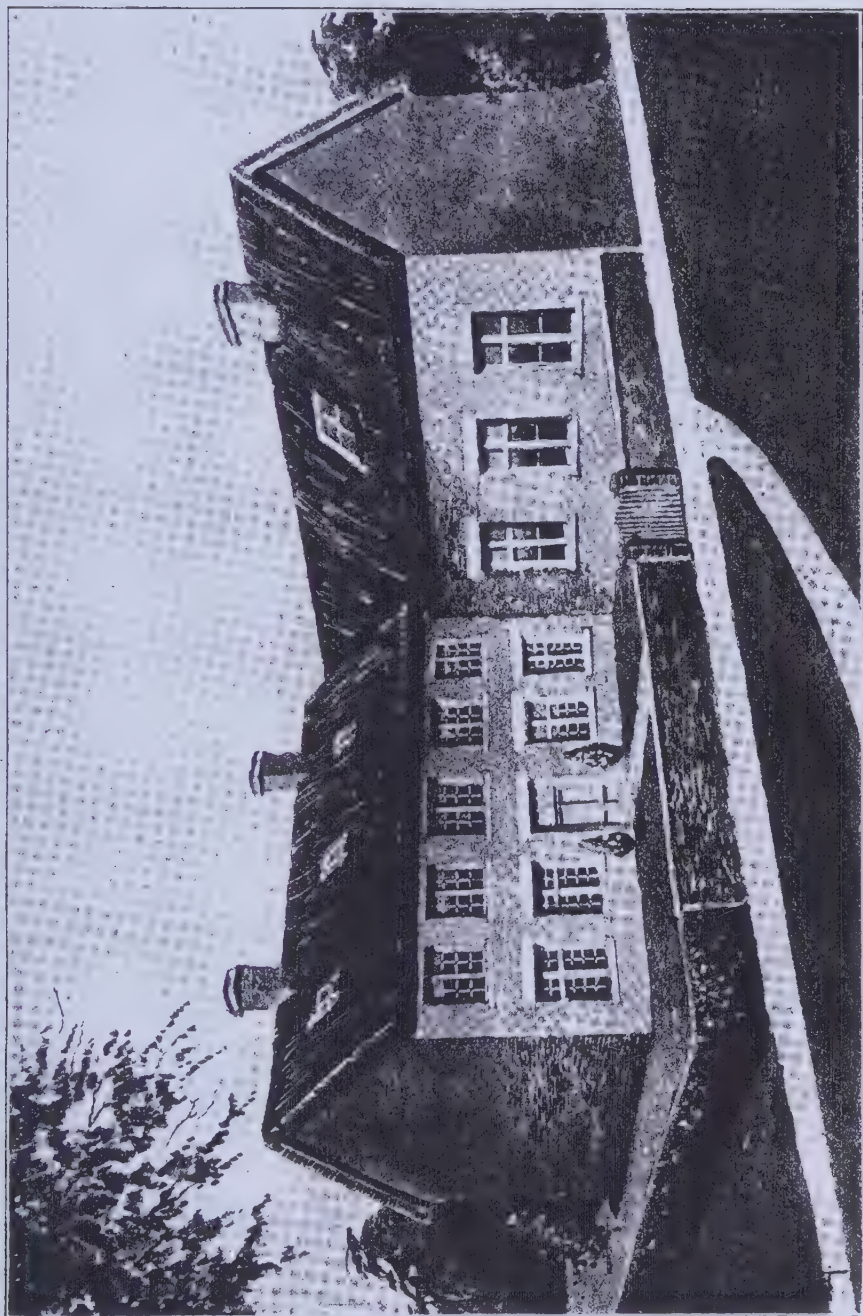
"In the year 1830," reports Father van der Zandt, "the Belgian revolution began its successful fight for independence, and presented to its followers a new constitution which secured freedom of religious worship to all. Soon the old convents rose from their ruins, and new cloisters came into existence. Catholic life reasserted itself and the reaction extended its influence even to the remotest corners of the land. One day I went to visit Catherine Daemen's estab-

ishment, and found her hammering and sawing at partitions for new cells. With the latest newspaper reports of Catholic developments still fresh in my mind it annoyed me to see her doing patchwork in her little house. 'What botching are you doing here?' I said, 'don't you know they are building new convents all over Belgium? Why don't you buy the "Kreppel," which you can easily transform into a convent, and where you will have plenty of rooms for cells?' "

This so-called "Kreppel," previous to the French Revolution, had been the manor of a nobleman and had served as a prison during the subsequent wars and the short intervals of peace. From this it probably got its name; the French word "crapule" meaning "drunken debauchery" had from its occupants readily become the Dutch "Kreppel" applied to the prison. With the transfer of the Province of Limburg to the Netherlands went also the title to the manor, which the government finally sold to the present owner, Baron Michiels van Verduynen.

Father van der Zandt could scarcely have given greater pleasure to Catherine than by this peremptory challenge, whether he intended it as a pleasantry or as an encouragement. More than once in the past had she broached this subject to him, and every time he had most positively objected to discuss it. Why did he now so unexpectedly propose it himself? She looked at him inquiringly, but there was no smile on his countenance to betray any banter on his part.

Catherine had long ago cast a longing eye upon the Kreppel; though it must seem preposterous how she could without any visible means aspire to a purchase so presumptuous as that of the manor. An explana-



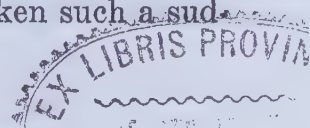
THE KREPPEL.

tion for the apparent absurdity of her intentions is recorded by both Sister Crescentia and Sister Pacifica which for this reason we must quote:—

"In the parish church of Heithuizen," writes Sister Pacifica, "there was a shrine of the Blessed Virgin before which Catherine frequently knelt in fervent prayer. Thither she went in many of her difficulties, and there God must have enlightened her in many of her perplexities. There also, as she stated herself in later years, she saw for the first time in spirit the very manor which she later purchased. She saw it, according to her own words, just as it was at the time of the purchase, and she saw it again as it was at the time of her death. It was only after beholding this strange apparition that she determined to look for the place till then entirely unknown to her.

"One morning she asked Mr. Raetson, the village mayor, to come and help her locate a house suitable for a convent, a request which was cheerfully granted. Together they drove in different directions and investigated several sites; but their excursion had been resultless when the approach of night admonished them to return. They were at that time on the highway leading from Leverooi to Heithuizen, and were fast nearing the home village when the Kreppel came into view. As soon as Catherine spied the mansion she exclaimed excitedly: 'That is the house I have seen, and there I must go. There is where God wants me.'

"Thereafter Catherine sauntered frequently towards the Kreppel and spoke of it to her pastor." "We could not understand," writes Sister Crescentia, "why Catherine, otherwise so retiring, had taken such a sud-



den fancy for the Kreppel, that she even led our school children several times in that direction. And whenever she came back from such a walk and noticed our questioning looks she would either smilingly remark: 'Don't worry! Let us live like true children of St. Francis, and God will take care of the rest', or, 'There is where we will have to go and build up a convent, and God will provide.' We looked at one another with astonishment, but none of us dared make an adverse comment or openly refer to our poverty.

"When we informed Father van der Zandt for the first time of Catherine's project he laughed uproariously, and then asked sarcastically how much money she had to invest in the venture. 'Do you perhaps imagine that you can buy Mr. Michiel's manor for an egg or an apple?' The very idea was so ridiculously preposterous that his Reverence had another fit of laughter. But Catherine, not daunted by the jesting comment at her expense, simply remarked, 'We must trust in God, He will provide.' "

Only a few months had elapsed since the foregoing scene took place, and now Father van der Zandt had not only laid aside his objections, he had come of his own accord to Catherine and encouraged her to proceed. What was, however, more important, God himself had already begun to provide.

One evening Catherine passed by Mr. Cillekens' store, and casually entered to procure a few necessary articles for the following day. Mr. Cillekens was a generous friend of Catherine's charities for which he had always a kind word and an open hand. After quietly making a parcel of the required articles and

handing it to her, he suddenly observed. "Sister Catherine, you must buy the Kreppel for a convent. Such a proposition does not come twice in a lifetime, and it is now for sale." "Thank you very kindly for informing me, Mr. Cillekens," Catherine calmly replied, "I would indeed willingly buy it, but you know I have no funds." "Don't let that worry you, Sister," he rejoined more advisedly, "I'll place \$50 at your disposal which you can repay me without interest whenever you feel able to do so."

Father van der Zandt was overjoyed when he learned of Mr. Cillekens' action, which he hoped would be an example for others. A real convent was one of his most ardent desires. A community of devout women, inspired by a true spirit of piety, who would consecrate their lives to works of mercy, would indeed prove of an immense benefit to his parish. He knew perfectly well that there were several pious young women in the parish who would willingly cast their lot with Catherine and her companions, if she could but accommodate them in her narrow quarters. Nor was he in any way disconcerted by their lack of a thorough education. He was too experienced not to realize that God sometimes makes use of what apparently seems to be the most unfit instruments to accomplish His designs. He felt happy at the thought that his sole difficulty, the purchase of a suitable house was now providentially nearing its solution by the acquisition of the splendid Kreppel.

The next step to be taken was to secure the Ordinary's consent for the formation of a regular religious community. Any further progress was impossible without his Superior's sanction, which he thought

would be joyfully given. Right Reverend Cornelius van Bommel was at that time Bishop of Liege, to which diocese Heithuizen then belonged. To him, therefore, in November, 1834, Father van der Zandt confidently addressed a long letter. It read as follows:

“Humbly and respectfully I hereby submit to Your Lordship the sentiments with which it has pleased Divine Providence to inspire Catherine Daemen, a devout woman, and member of the Third Order of St. Francis.

“Nearly nine years have now elapsed since she arrived at my request from Maeseyck, and made Heithuizen her home. Not long after her arrival she began, with the assistance of a few pious young women of her choice, to undertake the instruction of the little girls and the care of the sick. In this work she has proved successful beyond the most sanguine expectations of both myself and my parishioners.

“There are at present five Sisters* under her direction, three of whom are professed Tertiaries like herself.

“Catherine has often deplored her inability to accommodate all who seek admission into her organization, for want of room; and in her confidential talks with me, has repeatedly declared herself more and more impelled by Divine Providence to seek a more spacious and more befitting building in which she might house at least from twelve to fifteen sisters,

*In addition of the four Sisters already mentioned, there were then in the community two others, Gertrude Berben, who later had to leave on account of sickness, and Angeline Kuesters, who died soon after.

where they could adopt a distinctively religious garb, and observe the rule more strictly.

"A suitable edifice has just been offered her by the ex-commissioner of the district of Limburg, Mr. Michiels, which, owing to its quiet location not far from the village, is admirably adapted for the purpose. Nor is the purchase price of only \$1,800 in any way unreasonable when we consider the 60 acres of land on which the mansion is located. The whole property is enclosed with a wide moat, and is generally called the 'Kreppel.' Her funds are this time naturally very small, but in her unlimited confidence in God she firmly trusts that He who has inspired her to begin this great work will likewise send generous souls to help her accomplish it. As a matter of fact, many will flock to her assistance as soon as Your Lordship will have sanctioned her undertaking; and the owner himself has promised not to urge the payment of the total purchase sum at this time.

"If Your Lordship so desire Catherine and her companions will continue to devote themselves to the care of the sick and to education of the young, and in the furtherance of these ends she will as soon as possible arrange the new building in part for a boarding-school.

"Before taking further steps in any direction, however, she wishes in all humility to submit these facts to the wise judgment of Your Lordship. Should you think favorably of her project she would be pleased to receive from you directions regarding the following points:

1. In whose name shall the said property be required?

2. May the Sisters assume a religious garb befitting the rule they follow?

3. Since there is a chapel in the mansion, would your Lordship grant permission in favor of the inmates for the celebration of Mass and the reception of the sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist?"

Both Catherine and her pastor placed great confidence in the favorable effect of this explanatory letter, and were therefore correspondingly disappointed when days and weeks passed without any answer from Liege. Father van der Zandt especially felt greatly annoyed and humiliated that "the Bishop evidently did not deem the matter sufficiently important to merit an answer." Catherine on the other hand accepted the apparent rebuff with meekness and humility, trusting with child-like confidence that God would take care of her project, if in His wisdom he foresaw it would promote His honor and glory.

While Father van der Zandt had espoused Catherine's cause with all the zeal of his determined nature and judged that his duly informed Ordinary should have given his approbation without delay, the latter, fully aware of the great responsibility he would assume by giving his consent, judged differently, and acted under the circumstances with all prudence and deliberation. As a Bishop and Pastor of the Church he recognized not merely the immense good derived from the establishment of a religious community and its powerful aid towards the spiritual advancement of a parish, but he considered also the scandal which might possibly be occasioned by a too hasty erection of such institutions, should they afterwards incur financial difficulties or not possess a true religious spirit.

After the Church has publicly declared her approval of a religious order and recognized it officially by grant-

ing it the right to wear a distinctly religious garb, what ever spiritual good is achieved by such a society redounds to the Church's glory as well as to its own. On the other hand, any harm caused by a religious order, or any scandal resulting from some offense reflects more discreditably upon the Church than it does upon the individual members composing such an organization. Hence the Church proceeds very cautiously, and makes a thorough investigation before she permits the establishment of a new association in her ranks. It was therefore presumptuous, to say the least, on the part of Father van der Zandt, in spite of his excellent intentions, to expect an immediate approval and to request without further delay a distinctly religious garb for his clients.

Bishop van Bommel was known as a man of great learning, piety and affability, but also as a prelate of tried prudence and wisdom so necessary during the political and ecclesiastical readjustment of that period. While he had the greatest interest in the revival of religious orders, he felt at the same time that in this case he could not countenance the formation of a new religious order under conditions apparently so unsettled as Father van der Zandt's letter indicated. Silence on his part seemed the best course to pursue till further developments made some action necessary. If Catherine's project came from God, it would bear a closer investigation, and it would then be early enough to sanction her work. While he wished in no way to oppose Divine Providence he deemed it equally reprehensible to act hastily.

Nor did the bishop's perplexing silence abate Catherine's courage. She was so thoroughly convinced she was doing the bidding of God's will that his inaction

matured in her a most heroic resolution. Catherine, the untutored and naturally timid Catherine, was determined to go personally to Liege, and explain everything to the bishop himself.

Humanly speaking, such a step must seem very ill-advised and even senseless. Had not His Lordship by his persistent silence impliedly declared himself against her ideas, or at least shown his complete lack of interest in its success? What could she expect from such a visit? The cold reception extended to her on her arrival at Heithuizen could not inspire her with any undue confidence in her success. Her very appearance had then spoken against her ability to perform anything of importance. She now intended to face the bishop, when at that time she had been cowed by the severe look of a priest. Did she really recollect and reflect on all the events of her first public humiliation? Moreover, the wintry season was hardly a time for such a journey on foot. Liege was about 36 miles from Heithuizen, and to travel that distance across the snow-covered heath was no small task. It would have been burdensome even in summer time for one of her age. Nor did she seem to give any attention to lodgings for the intervening nights. Evidently, human prudence would have deterred any woman but Catherine from so daring an exploit, and the only explanation possible under the circumstances is that in her act were combined a most admirable humility, and the daring of a child, which her complete confidence in Divine Providence could alone inspire.

Father van der Zandt, according to eye witnesses, was dumbfounded with consternation when Catherine told him of her resolve. He gazed at her with mingled feel-

ings of anger and pity. Finally he broke out almost roughly: "Put that kind of nonsense out of your head, Catherine. It is absurd. They won't even permit you to enter the bishop's presence. And should you really succeed in being admitted, your very appearance will be enough to frustrate any design to win His Lordship over to your cause." But Catherine, without seeming to feel the irony implied in his words, humbly answered: "If only Your Reverence will allow me to go, God will provide."

Such confidence in God proved irresistible, and Father van der Zandt determined to assist her as much as lay in his power. On the 21st of February, 1835, he penned a letter of recommendation for her to the vicar-general of the diocese of Liege, which in a few words contains so excellent a character portrait of our humble foundress that we cannot resist reproducing it.

"Since the letter I wrote some time ago to his Lordship regarding the establishment of a religious community in my parish has till now remained unanswered, the petitioner to whom that communication referred, and who is none other than the bearer of this recommendation, has deemed it her duty to present herself in person before Your Reverence, and to humbly place before you the details of her project."

"The execution of an undertaking of such magnitude by the bearer may at first sight seem surprising. Personally, however, I have greatest confidence in her ability, and I have no hesitation in testifying that she is not of a vacillating or talkative disposition that may be shaken by every wind. She is stable, grave and true in character, and modest, pious and devout. With a childlike confidence she relies deeply upon God, Who has

already accomplished in her favor things seemingly impossible.

“My personal conviction in this matter is that God, who is most admirable in all His works, uses often, for the accomplishment of His designs, instruments weak, frail and despised by worldly wisdom. Hence, I thought it wrong to oppose myself to her earnest desire of going to see His Lordship.”

CHAPTER VII.

CATHERINE GOES TWICE TO LIEGE.

Her Disappointment and Success.

"In the Lord I put my trust; how then can you say to my soul: Get thee away from hence to the mountain like a sparrow?" Ps. X. 1.

It was a chilly day in February, 1835, when Catherine, at a very early morning hour, departed on her distant journey, of which she wished to complete as much as possible before night. The air was clear, but the landscape still presented a snowy, wintry aspect; the trackless heath, a vast winding sheet of spotless whiteness. Some hearty words of cheer were exchanged between her and her companions, who even then would fain have restrained her from apparently so futile an undertaking. Catherine stepped out into an icy eastern breeze which rendered the cold atmosphere doubly intense. A few belated stars still twinkled as it were, in pity upon the solitary wanderer as she passed through the sleeping village at that hour. Nothing broke the nightly stillness save the barking of some watchdog and the regular thud of her heavy wooden clogs, which marked the progress, till she had gained the open heath. With a little bundle in one hand and her rosary in the other, she advanced as rapidly as her forty-eight years and the snow drifts would permit. The dawning day found her some miles from Heithuizen, and when the bright winter sun illumined the snowy scene, she was already worn out by the unwonted efforts of plowing her pathway through the now resplendent mounds of snow.

Wearily she stops and turns to look back, but noth-

ing greets her eye save here and there a bush or stunted tree, which like so many skeletons scarcely break the monotony of the waste. Bravely she resumes her toilsome march. Each heavy step becomes more toilsome from the stiffening breeze and deep snow. Again she turns to look as if expecting help, and again she advances, her aching eyes, blinded by the glistening masses of snow at her feet, have discovered nothing. Suddenly a gust of wind much stronger or more unkind than previous ones casts her roughly into the snow-filled ditch along the edge of the highway. "Poor creature that I am," she mutters, almost losing heart, "I can't even keep on my feet; and I want to build a convent." Laboriously she extricates herself from her plight and calmly tries to remove the signs of her mishap. While so employed she unconsciously gives her wearing apparel a closer inspection; a black skirt, a dark jacket and an apron of the same color. It is her gala dress in which she will appear before the Bishop. A weary smile crosses her face. Is it on account of the poverty of her fineries, or because of a passing recollection of the red apron she once wore on her way to that memorable village dance? Who knows?

Poor Catherine's mishap on that dismal wintry day cannot but excite our sincere sympathy and admiration. Had her mind been bent on the quest of gold or earthly treasures, such as inspires the fortune hunter on the icy fields of Alaska, even then, her condition would have elicited our commiseration. But she is not thinking of earthly gain or worldly honors. Not unlike the saintly Joan of Arc, she is impelled to do God's bidding at whatever cost. Setting at naught her advancing years, despite her former life of indigence and privation,

prompted solely by her intense love of God and her ardent desire to promote His interests, she undertakes unselfishly this hardship, to which her fading strength threatens to yield. Her spirit of supreme self-sacrifice must certainly win our sympathetic admiration.

But let us now return to her as she bravely toils onward through the snow. Another few miles have been traversed in silent prayer, her bundle growing heavier at every instant. Suddenly a vehicle rouses her from her meditation, and a friendly voice hails her by her name: "Ho! Catherine, how in the world did you get here? Whither are you going in this fearful weather?" It was Father Scheyven, the assistant pastor of Nederweert, who accosted her. He was a native of Heithuizen, and had frequently heard of Catherine through Father van der Zandt. "I am on my way to Liege," she replied, "I am going to see the Bishop on some important business." "Well, well," he answered, "that's fine indeed, Catherine, I am on my way to see His Lordship too, and as we are going the same way, you might as well get into this buggy and ride with me." Under ordinary circumstances Catherine would have demurred, but tired as she was with two-thirds of the road still before her, she gratefully accepted the invitation, and thanked God for having sent assistance so seasonably.

When she arrived at Liege she went according to Father van der Zandt's directions, immediately to the Vicar-General, and presented her letter of recommendation. No matter how her personal appearance might impress him, the communication itself produced the desired effect. The Very Rev. Kerckhoffs not only treated her most kindly, he escorted her himself straightway to the Bishop.

A look of surprise passed over His Lordship's countenance when Catherine most humbly and reverently greeted him on her knees. He bade her be seated and inquired into the object of her visit.

"Your Lordship," she began without tremor, emotion or any sign of embarrassment, "strange as it may appear to you, I have for a long time felt myself impelled to establish a convent, and come to you in the name of myself and my companions to ask your gracious permission that we may be allowed to assume the habit of St. Francis and follow the rule of the Third Order." "That is all very good," replied the Bishop coolly, "but do you know what an undertaking of such magnitude means financially? Have you any funds?" "To tell the truth, my Lord," she replied, "we have not. Myself and my few companions depend entirely on the work of our hands for a livelihood. We also conduct a school for poor children and take care of the sick. Our most cherished wish, however, is to lead a regulated convent life, and to open a small boarding school for girls, if Your Lordship will kindly give us your consent." "All very fine, Sister, and very nicely planned, indeed, but do you know that a school requires capable teachers, who are themselves educated? Are there any such among your number?" Catherine admitted very candidly there were none who could claim more than a most rudimentary education. "How then," retorted the Bishop, "can you entertain such a project seriously?"

"Your Lordship," responded Catherine humbly and yet more firmly than he had anticipated, "this is not going to be my work. I am entirely incapable either to plan or to execute it. God has inspired me to undertake it, and it is He who will take care of it."

This answer, far from dispelling the Bishop's perplexity, served rather to confirm his prejudice against her. Catherine must certainly be very dull and a most inexperienced person to try to meet every difficulty of her project by referring it to Divine Providence. He thought all her ideas must be the result of a religiously overwrought brain, and mentally censured Father van der Zandt severely for even countenancing her extravagant design. If His Reverence's former letter had produced no serious impression on His Lordship, the poor ignorant petitioner before him convinced him still less of the feasibility of the scheme. It was absolutely preposterous even to imagine the establishment of a creditable convent under such conditions. These thoughts occupied the Bishop's mind in rapid succession, while he walked for a few moments back and forth in the room. Finally he turned almost abruptly to Catherine and said very decidedly. "No, I cannot give my approbation to your proposed enterprise, because the necessary guarantees are lacking."

It was the signal which ended her interview. She rose from her seat, knelt humbly to receive the Bishop's blessing, and with her customary 'Praise be to Jesus Christ,' she left the apartment. She had utterly failed.

With what sentiments she accepted her discomfiture, and with what thoughts she occupied her mind during her toilsome homeward journey it is not difficult to conjecture. We need but call attention to the simple manner in which she related the failure of her wearisome mission to her companions. No trace of ill humor clouded her countenance when she entered her little house. "Dear children," she remarked with humble frankness, "my

journey has been fruitless, but let us continue to trust in God unreservedly. He will provide." With so admirable an example of modest submission before them, the Sisters quietly accepted the unexpected trial, and no word of complaint was uttered.

The test of Catherine's humility, however, was not yet complete. A greater and severer mortification awaited her, and came through a letter which the Vicar-General directed to Father van der Zandt on the 27th of February, 1835. In it His Reverence gave the following report of Catherine's visit:

"I have seen that devout person of your parish. She came here last week, and I immediately obtained an audience for her, which took place in my presence, and lasted about fifteen minutes.

"After listening attentively to her statements, His Lordship praised her for the work she was doing, encouraged her to continue, and finally concluded in about the following terms: 'Your pious intention is certainly praiseworthy and good; equally excellent are the objects of your association, to take care of the sick in the parish and to promote the instruction and education of the young by the establishment of a Christian school. So far your pious aspirations are undoubtedly good and laudable. The great question is how will you impart such instruction? Are there even two among you capable to undertake such a task?' Her answer was all but satisfactory, very uncertain and rather negative than affirmative. She simply lives in hopes and builds on them.

"My personal conviction, dear Father, in view of the individual lack of proper qualifications in this woman, as well as her financial position, must be that we should

commit an act of grave imprudence by allowing her to base her whole scheme on Divine Providence. It is not the usual course of Providence merely to impel a person to perform a certain work, God generally provides his chosen instruments also with the necessary qualifications and the means to accomplish a noble end, or at least directs circumstances in such a manner that there is a reasonable prospect of success. But in this case the most fundamental requirements are sadly lacking. None of those women, as far as I have been able to ascertain, is in any way capable of beginning a school, which would so far satisfy the most elementary demands of our times that children could learn how to read and write correctly

“Regarding their care of the sick, I am frank to state that their work does not seem so very important in a parish like yours. They can scarcely undertake with propriety to nurse sick men, and how many sick women demanding their services might there be in the little village? The situation would be different if Heit-huizen were a city or a large community.

“Such is the substance of the Bishop’s conversation with the devout woman. She asked for his written approbation, which he naturally refused. Besides, I personally think that this refusal may prove of benefit to you from another viewpoint. If we should again come under the rule of the King of Holland, His Lordship’s approbation would be rather detrimental than advantageous to a religious house and community.

“I hope I have been sufficiently clear in stating the Bishop’s views and sentiments in the present case. As you will notice, he has in no way forbidden the good woman to proceed with her present work.”

M. S. KERCKHOFFS, V. G.

This forceful epistle was certainly far from agreeable to the well-meaning pastor of Heithuizen, who had so zealously and generously espoused Catherine's interest. It plainly contained a mild censure, and covertly accused him of credulity and imprudence in a matter of such importance.

Scarcely had he perused the communication when he excitedly donned his coat and hat and repaired straightway to the Sisters' home. The Sisters were all together when he entered the room. The proffered seat was curtly refused, and he proceeded forthwith to administer a severe reprimand to Catherine. "You have brought me into no little trouble," he said, producing the accusing letter, "I have here a most disagreeable epistle from Liege. The Bishop blames me for not preventing you from going to him. You know you would not listen to me when I suggested your visit might result in failure. But now let me tell you openly: get that project out of your head once and forever." It was certainly a most distressing scene for all present. But Father van der Zandt's unusual severity seemed to confound the other Sisters more than it did Catherine.

"Please forgive me, Father," she said, humbly and meekly, "that on my account annoyance should have come to you. Most certainly I'll try to do better in the future." Her simple appeal completely disarmed his reverence. He almost regretted mentioning a word.

Catherine's confidence remained unshaken in spite of these rebuffs and humiliations, but she realized that for the present at least, nothing more could be done. God must first furnish a new incentive in the interest of His cause and above all provide tangible means. The Bishop had not positively refused his consent, it is true, yet

he was evidently prejudiced against her project and very emphatically advised against its execution under present conditions. She did not blame him for his prudence. She possessed naturally too great a respect for all Church authority to find fault with his decision, and submitted with childlike obedience to his superior judgment.

The horizon of Catherine's life now seemed indeed completely darkened. Look where she would there was no bright ray of hope lining the somber aspect of her clouded future. The Bishop had blandly but firmly refused to sanction her work, her spiritual adviser, Father van der Zandt, had flatly declined to countenance any further efforts, and even her silent and patient companions seemed disheartened by the outlook. They looked up to her for encouragement.

Yet Catherine anticipated a future, despite her frustrated hopes. Her visits to our Lady's shrine now became more frequent, her fervent prayers more intense and her mortification more severe. No mortal will ever penetrate the secret struggles of her soul during that crucial period. Her confessor, to whom she revealed all, understood her passing doubts and encouraged her constant trust in Providence, but God alone, witnessed the momentary distressing perplexities of her confiding heart. Before the tabernacle and in Holy Communion she made Him the confidant of her anxieties, which no one could surmise from her usually calm and peaceful demeanor. She possessed no deep theological knowledge, she saw in God only the Supreme Master to Whom all creatures owe a perfect and cheerful submission, at all times and under all circumstances, Whom, therefore, she obeyed and worshipped with the sincerity of a child. On Him she cast all her cares: "God will provide."

Nor did God forsake her. When all seemed darkest His help was nearest. We shall quote Father van der Zandt's record of the providential events that suddenly changed the discouraging outlook.

"Catherine's motto, 'God will provide,' was soon to be fulfilled. About this time a servant girl, Gertrude Berben, from Baexen near Heithuizen, applied for admission, and placed at Catherine's disposal about \$600 which she had saved during her long service in the city of Antwerp. Almost simultaneously with hers, came the request of an old servant of my cousin, Father van der Zandt, pastor of Wessen. Her name was Elizabeth Ceurts. She also had saved about \$200, which she intended to give towards the purchase of the Kreppel, provided she could make her home with Catherine till the end of her days. When all this money came together I could hardly restrain the good Sister any longer. She felt her moment of success was fast approaching."

She had at her command not only these \$800 in cash, there were also \$300 to be easily realized by the sale of her present property. She had consequently more than one-half of the sum required for the purchase of the Kreppel. No wonder her heart felt jubilant over the almost complete change of her financial condition. The sole remaining difficulty was now the defective education of the Sisters. "But," thought Catherine, "God will take care of that part."

With renewed fervor she thanked her hidden Lord and His holy Mother for the mercies received, and asked for light to know what course to pursue. A few days later she unexpectedly announced to Father van der Zandt her determination to go once more to Liege and confer with the Bishop. His reverence affected a little

surprise, but in reality he was fully aware that neither fear of a prospective humiliation nor any apprehension of jeopardizing her project could deter her from her once fixed resolve. He also understood her artless soul too well not to know that her determination was born not of stubbornness or pride, but of her childlike obedience to God and the thorough conviction that she was, in this, doing His bidding. He was also convinced that the time had at last arrived when Divine Providence would interpose in her behalf, and that his words to the Vicar-General 'God grants her many things seemingly impossible' would be verified. If such were his sentiments he did not voice them.

Spring had begun her rejuvenating labors in nature when Catherine made her second journey to Liege. The snow had been carefully swept away, and the verdant heath was now dotted with many a wild blossom and flower. Even the dwarfish trees and bushes were fast assuming their garb of hope. Beads in hand she walked along scarcely noticing with more than a passing glance so much new-born beauty. Perhaps she was thinking of how, years ago, when she was still at home, she loved to stroll amidst such scenes with little Jenny. How times had changed since then! Age had gradually encroached upon her youth while she was trying to do God's work. The years had taken every vestige of sprightliness from her movements, and yet, to tell the truth, she traveled this time more alertly than on that wintry day when her weary feet plowed heavily through the icy snow. Suddenly a skylark disturbed by the approach of the solitary wanderer, sprang from the nearby heather, singing as it soared into the sky, a song to its Maker. The glad-some message of the bird re-echoed the joyous feelings

in Catherine's heart. Had not all she had undertaken for her Master succeeded beyond human expectations? How happy and retired would she live for Him in the Kreppel as soon as the Bishop would give his consent to her project! But would he do so? "Well," she said aloud, "let God provide; it is His work, not mine."

If Father van der Zandt had anticipated for her, scant courtesy from the Bishop his expectations were not to be realized; her reception was most friendly. Sincere simplicity and unpretending humility possess a peculiar attractiveness which appeal to the hearts of our fellow men. His Lordship inquired almost sympathetically concerning her present work, and listened again very attentively to her petition. It differed in no way from her former request, and yet there was something new, her personal charm triumphed over his old determined opposition. Patiently he discussed with her every financial detail of her new proposition, her hopes and prospects; there was practically a very immaterial change in her situation, and yet he felt his prejudice overcome during the confidential exposition of facts. He yielded to her unswerving and unlimited confidence in God, which won the victory over his heart without convincing his reason. Finally he dismissed her in his own affable manner with his blessing, and the much coveted approbation for her project.

Strange to say, the Bishop could never explain to his own satisfaction why he had granted her wishes. When he had been informed of her arrival and before she had entered his presence, he was fully determined to give her such a stern reception that she never again would dare molest him. But when she knelt in greeting, so submissively before him, and raised her gravely appeal-

ing eyes to him, every trace of resistance seemed to vanish from him, her imploring look called so eloquently for assistance. In an instant and almost intuitively, he understood that there was no pious hallucination, no hysterical deception, but straightforward simplicity, profound humility and childlike confidence in Divine Providence. He had clearly surrendered to some unaccountable impulse. This mental condition he openly avowed to his vicar-general after Catherine's departure. "I was unable to contradict her in spite of myself."

In a later communication to Father van der Zandt the Bishop frankly stated: "I do not know what restrained me. I received her with the firm determination to refuse her request absolutely. As a matter of fact. I cannot even now detect any material progress in her financial condition nor any prospect of success, and yet I felt myself incapable of resisting her. Let her start her new project, and do what God wants her to do."

Catherine's happiness at seeing her difficulties vanish one after the other may be rather imagined than described. Her heart overflowed with gratitude towards God who had so visibly rewarded her confidence. Her longings and hopes were gradually nearing their fulfillment. The Church through her representative had sanctioned and blessed her project, and what more could she desire? God would certainly also take care of the rest.

But she was not the only one to rejoice at the successful issue of her struggle for recognition. There was happiness at the parsonage when the news arrived. Father van der Zandt thanked God almost as fervently as Catherine herself. Had not he also, been humiliated for her sake? Had not his superior on her account re-

proached him with hasty credulity and lack of prudence? And now his Lordship himself had fallen a complete victim to Catherine's simple devotion! Truly God's ways are wonderful!

A little incident which occurred on Catherine's homeward journey is worthy of record, because it serves to illustrate her unsuspecting candor and simplicity. It has been perpetuated by Father Greven of Grathem, an intimate friend of Father van der Zandt.

"One evening," he says, "somebody rang my doorbell, and what was my surprise on opening the door to see Catherine before me. She was on her way from Liege to Heithuizen, and naturally told me straightway of her success with the Bishop. 'But,' said I, 'You need more than his Lordship's blessing to build a convent. What you need most is money.' 'Very true, your reverence,' she replied, smilingly, 'God is taking care of that. I have already some with me.' 'Indeed,' said I, 'and where might you have that?' 'It is on the wagon with which some good people of Maeseyck are bringing me home.' After she had rested and refreshed herself a little, the driver called for her to take her seat in the vehicle. I accompanied her and helped her to her place, and really there lay a bag under the driver's seat containing, as I later learned, about \$200, which a gentleman in Liege, whom she had interested in her cause, had given her. 'But, Catherine,' I said amazed, 'how could you leave so much money in an open wagon?' In answer she merely smiled, and continued her journey."

CHAPTER VIII.

REMOVAL TO THE KREPPEL. NEW TRIALS.

"Gold and silver are tried in the fire, but the acceptable man in the furnace of humiliation." Ecclus. II. 5.

No heartache is so intense as that inflicted by those we truly love, no awakening more distressing than to find ourselves deserted by our most trusted friends, and no ingratitude more revolting than when given in return for generous self-sacrifice. Catherine loved and cherished her companions like a mother, and would, at any cost to her, have warded from them moments of suffering or pain. She implicitly relied on their unswerving fidelity for the furtherance of her noble cause, which they had from the beginning so hopefully seconded and sanctioned, and for almost ten years she had magnanimously spent herself in the service of the villagers. From these sources she expected unquestionably the greatest encouragement at this time when all circumstances seemed to point to a successful issue, and yet, from these least suspected sources now came the severest of all her trials.

The Kreppel had been duly purchased, and a very satisfactory part payment made, but owing to Catherine's financial condition, she had to submit to certain less agreeable conditions. The present tenant whose contract of lease expired only three years later was to retain the exclusive use of the land and to occupy with his family a certain part of the building at his selection. If Catherine had been financially able to purchase his interests in the property she could have come

immediately into the undisturbed possession of the whole domain, but this was obviously impossible, and she had to acquiesce.

Had all the sisters been able to inspect the Kreppel before the purchase was consummated, they would probably not have consented to such an investment of the funds, and now, that the transfer was made under the foregoing conditions they went to see the part assigned for their temporary use. They went there with the intention of fitting their quarters for occupancy, but returned thoroughly disgusted and dissatisfied. Dissension and a determined opposition to Catherine's proposed change was the consequence. A complete inspection of the mansion and the premises had dispelled every vestige of enthusiasm. They wanted to remain in their present narrow quarters which suddenly seemed doubly dear to all. They loved their little home, despite its inconveniences because of the vicinity of the church and also on account of its advantageous location for their school and charitable work in the village.

The Kreppel mansion was at this time a somber, forbidden-looking building, not unlike all the present relics of former, mediaeval grandeur. It resembled rather the prison it had once been than an abode for free and liberty-loving inmates. The deep, wide moat encircling the property, without any visible outlet for its dark mass of ill-smelling, turbid waters, was the home of swarms of gnats and other bothersome insects in summer, and made the house damp and the air chilly in winter. The tenant had so informed them.

This chief source of dissatisfaction was strengthened by other circumstances which under other conditions would probably have escaped notice, but now served to

increase their dislike. The present old home, situated in the center of the village, was easy of access for their pupils, and helped to bring the constant indigence of the sisters more readily to the notice of their supporters. The distance of the Kreppel from the village would of necessity affect both attendance and support, especially in winter. There was in addition the long way between the mansion and the church, which would make their frequent visits to the Blessed Sacrament almost impossible, and deprive them to a large extent of any spiritual consolation. There was indeed a large tract of land, but it yielded to the present tenant, according to his own statement, only a very ordinary crop for his steady and laborious drudgery. Finally, it was most disagreeable to be forced to live for three long years in such close proximity with the tenant and his family, without being able to utilize enough of land for their own purposes as might satisfy the most necessary wants of the household. To make a change under such circumstances seemed absurd.

A last objection, no less forceful was raised in favor of Sister Anne Mary Verkolen. She was the oldest one among them, and had at this time grown rather decrepit and somewhat lame. Her case was certainly to be taken into consideration before any change was made. She had worked faithfully and uncomplainingly since her arrival, and did not deserve to be almost totally deprived of her only consolation, to attend Mass daily, which would be absolutely impossible at the Kreppel. The very thought of having to move to that isolated place brought tears to the afflicted sister's eyes.

Worse than this trial of domestic infelicity and inconstancy was the sad experience of human ingratitude.

The purchase of the Kreppel had not long remained a secret in the little hamlet. Although some of the leading burghers, such as Mr. Cillekens, had encouraged Catherine's action, the common crowd of citizens who had most participated in her benefactions without being in any way able to remunerate her, now rose against the proposed change from selfish motives or inconvenience for their children. Those who had till then countenanced her movement, now wisely held their peace for reasons of business.

A wise philosopher says: "There is no being more ungrateful than man." A dog will caress the hand that feeds him, a horse remains true to a kind master in time of danger, but there is no priest or sister or worker of charity, who cannot furnish an experience of human ingratitude, the reward for acts of generous self-sacrifice.

Catherine had come to Heithuizen poor and even despised. She had gathered the waifs and street gamins of the burgh, educated them, and lived solely for their advancement for more than ten years without any help or hope of recompense on the part of its citizens. She and her companions had gone from door to door to beg for the poor of the village, whilst they themselves were starving. They had passed into the houses of the sick and distressed, and brought cheer, comfort and relief at the greatest personal sacrifices. To be better able to accomplish their charitable efforts in behalf of the villagers, they had by personal exertion and the expenditure of poor Catherine's patrimony erected the present uncomfortable structure for themselves merely to house their children. It had certainly been a long period of labor in indigence and unselfish privation; and

now, when Catherine wished to house her own companions more comfortably, and to enlarge her activity in their favor without craving additional assistance on their part, they objected, merely because those former ragged urchins had to travel a little farther to reach the Sisters' school! Such is the gratitude of the mob, and the transitory popularity it bestows! Today, it loudly extols a benefactor, seeming or real; tomorrow, it jeers and mocks him, when he most craves support and encouragement. While some pitied the Sisters as misguided religious emotionalists; others, absolutely condemned them and their pretentious aspirations, and loaded them with all manner of vituperations, because they did not seem to relish their poor, indigent condition! Only a few indorsed privately their progressive movement, which later proved the material as well as the spiritual salvation of the village.

These changes of popular sentiment, this apparent fickleness of her associates, combined with financial difficulties, would have discouraged anyone less rooted in an unconditional confidence in God than Catherine. Scarcely had she secured the Bishop's reluctant consent when she had to feel the opposition of her companions; scarcely had her financial condition entitled her to some hope of success when she had apparently forfeited the good will of those for whose benefit she intended to labor.

Under such adverse circumstances her firm trust in God and her cheerful patience must appear most admirable. To her own companions, her eloquently appealing look was a severer reprimand and proved more effective than any spoken word of encouragement. For her detractors she had no word of blame and for her

censorers no argument. Her silent firmness alone betrayed her fixed determination which at so precarious a time, could be instilled only by the conviction that she was following the bidding of Divine Providence.

“ ‘God will provide!’ This motto, says Father van der Zandt, “proved her anchor of hope during her present affliction. Her soul felt no discouragement, because she felt that every work of God must bear the seal of our Redemption, the cross, and that crosses and trials are the surest basis of success.”

Her constant and fervent prayers for harmony, her invariable reference of all her undertakings to God's Will as the final cause of her actions, and more than all, the cheering words of Father van der Zandt gradually overcame every resistance on the part of the Sisters, and finally restored peace and harmony in the little community. The pastor expressed his firm conviction, that they would soon have the Blessed Sacrament and Mass in their own chapel, and this information chiefly helped to rouse a new enthusiasm for the Kreppel. Even Sister Anne Mary Verkolen had to admit that under such circumstances the Kreppel was far more attractive than their present narrow quarters, and that such happiness was well worth a few months of self-denial and privations. She being the greatest sufferer by the proposed change, her word of encouragement helped to turn the tide.

Peace and good will soon reigned again in Catherine's home, and set the signal for the energetic prosecution of the new enterprise. It was no small task to restore, renovate, and fit the old mansion for the reception of the Sisters; but with the return of cheerfulness and harmony the work rapidly progressed in spite of wagging,

village tongues. Every morning after Mass as many as could be spared from the necessary school work marched with baskets and brooms, buckets and brushes, towards the neglected manor-house. They swept and scoured, whitewashed and burnished, day by day, and the progress of their preliminary labors was effected only in the sweat of their brows, happiness was once more written on their faces, and words of cheer were not infrequently interjected. The old saying:

*“Ubi amatur non laboratur,
Aut si laboratur
Labor amatur.”

“There is no labor where there is love.”

was truly verified. Father van der Zandt himself actively superintended the renovating work, and animated them with many a pleasant remark, while his heart was full of sympathetic admiration for their indefatigable perseverance.

Nearly five weeks were thus consumed after the purchase of the property before the Sisters could move into their new quarters. The change itself, as the reader will readily surmise, was for obvious reasons accomplished without much delay or difficulty. In fact, when their few pieces of furniture had been properly located, they discovered for the first time the full extent of their poverty. As long as their belongings had occupied their former narrow quarters, where they were inconveniently crowded together, the Sisters had deemed themselves rich, but now place the furniture as they would, the rooms still seemed empty. Only little by little they became accustomed to the unfamiliar surroundings. On the 10th of May, 1835, in the presence

of his whole congregation and of the few Sisters, Father van der Zandt, after solemnly invoking the Holy Ghost, formally dedicated and blessed the FUTURE MOTHER-HOUSE OF THE CONGREGATION. There was joy written on all faces at the happy conclusion of this first solemn act; and not even the most critical tongue in the parish dared comment adversely on the completed, fortunate change. In spite of the impressive opening ceremony the mansion remained, however, the damp and repulsive looking building it had always been, and many a painfully affectionate look greeted the old house whenever the Sisters passed it on their way to the village church. It stood there like an old and trusted friend who had witnessed their trials and privations and who would not be ignored. Sister Anne Mary Verkolen even suppressed stealthily a few tears that rose to her eyes as she wearily mounted the few church steps. Experience now showed but too clearly that the objections and prejudices of the Sisters against the Kreppel were not merely imaginary but founded on stubborn facts. They all suffered from the real inconveniences of the new location.

Not to mention the very depressing effect of the spacious rooms, almost bare of furniture where they did not feel at home, their isolation from the good villagers upon whose little support and neighborliness they had largely depended, now began to weigh heavily on them. Their indigence, as they later related, had constantly increased from the day they entered their new quarters, because very few cared to travel so far to supply their wants. The school attendance, either on account of the greater distance or for other reasons, had also diminished. In fact, there were those among their critics

who maliciously predicted that the Sisters would finally have to close their new establishment and return to their former humbler home. "Everybody laughed at us," says Father van der Zandt, "and considered our undertaking a failure, in fact, a huge standing joke of self-conceited stupidity and ignorance."

The Sisters could have borne the unkind taunts of the villagers patiently enough, if the important matter of attending church were settled to their satisfaction. From their new location they were just able to see the church steeple and no more. They could hail the sacred edifice from the distance and listen to the ringing of its bells three times a day, but the very sound made them melancholy; their hearts longed for the vicinity of their hidden God for Whose sake they had brought the sacrifice of their lives. Only once a day could all go there, and but occasionally one or the other could make more frequent visits when errands of charity otherwise permitted. The life at the Kreppel for these reasons was consequently far from being a desirable one, and nothing, save the hope of a change in their spiritual isolation kept contentment and courage alive.

But Catherine's cup of sorrow was not yet exhausted; worse days and graver trials were in store for her. Some time after taking possession of the Kreppel two postulants were duly admitted into the Third Order by the Very Rev. Father Leonard, O. F. M. C., the guardian of the monastery at Maeseyck. They were Gertrude Berben and Angeline Kuesters who then began their year of probation. All the Sisters looked upon their reception with sympathetic joy and hopefulness, because they were the first recruits for the new congregation, and as it were, the first sprouts of the young tree. Alas, their

gladsome hopes were but shortlived. God's own hand seemed to rest heavily upon the scarcely rooted society. Angeline, the younger one of the two, fell a victim to a violent disease and after making her profession on her deathbed, died on the 8th of October, 1835. A still sadder fate awaited Gertrude Berben, who, as will be remembered, had generously donated her savings of \$600 at the time of her admission, and so made the purchase of the Kreppel possible. She became afflicted with hysterical hallucinations, or to use the words of Father van der Zandt: "She began to prophesy, by which we concluded she was suffering from nervous disorders. We allowed her to leave, and gave her back what money she had brought at her admission."

Such vicissitudes would have convinced anyone but Catherine and her spiritual director, that instead of God's blessing His displeasure was resting upon her enterprise. They had certainly a very dejecting effect upon the rest of the community. Not only had the new congregation lost its first aspirants, but the repayment made to Gertrude Berben had more than increased their debts; it had effectively intensified their poverty. They were now poor indeed without any visible prospect of relief.

Catherine, upon whom the burden of responsibility chiefly rested, suffered greatly by these visitations, and her misery was intensified by the very evident discouragement of her companions "How long, O Lord, how long!"—she complained to God alone, and He, who comforted Job in his distress, and strengthened his faith by the very trials he endured, sent also the spirit of confiding resignation into her heart. The heavier the Hand of God seemed to rest upon the infant society, the

humbler was her submission to His adorable and inscrutable designs, and the firmer her unwavering confidence in His Providence. She hoped apparently against all hope, and abided God's time.

Her companions in the common affliction looked up to her for fortitude, and it seemed as if these reverses had for the time being linked them even closer together. But Catherine felt that no good could come of the gloomy brooding over their visitations; she must raise their moody spirits to other and more cheering thoughts.

With this intent, she now approached Father van der Zandt and begged him kindly for her own and the Sisters' sake to complete the good work at whatever sacrifice, by investing them with the religious habit; that thus they might openly profess the life they were trying to lead. The good pastor understood her position perfectly, and agreed that such course would not only have a beneficial effect upon the Sisters, but would also help to silence the detracting tongues of the people. It would likewise supply them with the real reason for their change of location, and thus stimulate them to furnish renewed assistance. Regarding this new phase of progress in the life of the incipient congregation, His Reverence records as follows:

"Catherine, despite all her adversities, remained firmly rooted in her absolute confidence in Divine Providence and animated with the same quiet and determined zeal. One day she came and entreated me to complete the good work without more delay, by allowing her and her companions for the love of God and St. Francis to assume the habit of the 'Penitents of St. Francis' or at least to assist her that such could be done at an early date. I greatly admired her holy zeal, but with-

out the sanction of the ecclesiastical authority, I was powerless to grant her petition immediately."

Father van der Zandt proceeded at once to devise and formulate to the best of his ability the rules and regulations for the guidance of the community, and dispatched them forthwith for examination and approval to Liege with the request that he be authorized to invest the Sisters with the habit of St. Francis.

The little community was now naturally full of expectation; everything else, even their misery, was forgotten; their whole attention being centered upon the favorable issue of their project. But weeks elapsed, and no word was received from the Bishop. Father van der Zandt himself wondered what reason there might be for such persistent silence, or what the apparent inaction might mean. Catherine and her companions had recourse to fervent prayer, the more insistent, the longer the delay lasted. Finally, on the 11th of November, the much desired answer came. We shall here reproduce verbatim the important document which gave to our Society the first official mark of ecclesiastical recognition.

"After a long delay, I am at last in a position to answer your favor, which really should have received an earlier attention. The continued absence of His Lordship and an extraordinary pressure of other important business are responsible for my seeming inaction in the present matter.

"Enclosed I return the statutes devised by you for the Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis of your parish, which, as you will notice, I have corrected and amended. We shall allow you to govern the Sisters temporarily according to these rules, that is to say, till they have been given a thorough test, and it may appear

whether or what changes will have to be definitely inserted for their better spiritual guidance. We grant you hereby every authority necessary or useful to direct the said Sisters towards the aims they have in view, to invest them with the religious habit, and to admit them after a due probationary period to pronounce their religious vows. We also grant you the faculty to give them, in keeping with their rules, the general absolution in articulo mortis.

“Concerning their vows, you will bear in mind that the Sisters may make them only for a short period of time, say for one or two years. Prudence prescribes this course in the case of the formation of new Congregations, which of necessity must develop gradually. No one may be permitted to make her perpetual vows without the express sanction of the ecclesiastical authority.”

Had the Bishop or the Vicar-General paid a previous visit to Heithuizen, and inspected actual conditions, financial and otherwise, of the new organization, their usual prudence and caution might have dictated a refusal of the request for ecclesiastical recognition, and such a course of human prudence would probably have marked the end of the incipient work. But uninformed, they acted evidently in keeping with the designs of Divine Providence, and saved the life of the congregation.

CHAPTER IX.

THE RELIGIOUS HABIT. THE FIRST RECEPTION.

"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy."
Ps. CXXV. 5.

It brings a great relief after a night of restless sleep filled with distracting dreams to find on awakening that our distresses and our dangers were merely fanciful. A similar sensation passed through Catherine Daemen's household when the Bishop's official communication arrived. It was like the awakening from a horrible nightmare, except that in their case the distress and the general depression which followed it had been only too real. God had allowed them to sink under the weight of afflictions in order to manifest to them all the more clearly His power and goodness. All the dark fears which had beset them now began to be dispelled, and a renewed hopeful activity took possession of them.

As soon as the ecclesiastical sanction had been read, and joyfully re-read, all the passed trials seemed forgotten under the stress of the more cheerful events before them. There were several important problems to be solved. What kind of habit was to be chosen? Where was the necessary material to be secured at the least expense in view of this poverty? Where could they secure a proper pattern for this habit in absence of all religious orders of their kind? The answers to these three questions seemed equally important and equally perplexing. Sister Pacifica's writings and "The Little Flower Garden" contain an interesting account of the solution of these difficulties which we shall submit to the reader.

One day Catherine said to Mary C. Deckers, whom, as has been related in a previous chapter, she had once rescued from the gravest doubts against her vocation: "Come, Mary, and let us take a walk." Mary readily consented. She had become particularly attached to our foundress from the time of that memorable occurrence. Together they walked for some time quite aimlessly across the untrodden heath. Catherine, totally given to her own thoughts, uttered not a word. From time to time she halted, and turning in the direction they had come, she allowed her eyes to wander over the autumnal landscape. Mary respected her companion's silence too much to interrupt her thoughts. She merely stopped and walked when and where her guide directed. At last, however, she ventured the question: "Sister Catherine, what are we doing on this heath? Why do you stop so frequently, and what makes you look about so attentively?"

"My dear child," answered Catherine, "when our Holy Father, St. Francis, was uncertain whither it was God's Will he should go, he was wont to stroll about, look around, and then take the first road that crossed his path. It is because I am thoroughly embarrassed on account of our poverty, and don't know where to get cloth for our habits without money, that I am just imitating his example. I am looking around and then trying to find the right road to follow."

"If that is all, Sister Catherine," exclaimed Mary joyfully, "I think I have a way out of the difficulty. A former very intimate friend of mine has married a dry goods merchant at Weert, and both are extremely pious and generous. I am confident they will let us have as much cloth as we need without demanding im-

mediate payment." "Thanks be to God," said Catherine, with a sigh of relief, "let us go there at once."

The dealer's wife was delighted to see Mary. They had been childhood companions, and had not seen each other for many a year. The greeting was therefore correspondingly cordial. Mary introduced Catherine to her friend and the latter's husband, and finally stated the object of their call. She fully detailed their present financial difficulties, and informed them of the Bishop's approval of the new convent. "And now," she concluded enthusiastically, "we should like to get material for our religious garb. As I have told you already, we are at this time short of funds, but I thought you would kindly let us have on credit what we need for the present. I just relied on old friendship and your generous heart when I asked Sister Catherine to come." "I am very glad, indeed, Mary, you placed so much confidence in me," replied her friend, "and I am sure I can answer for my husband. It will be a pleasure to both of us to be able to accommodate you. You need not at all worry about paying. We are now, with God's help, so situated that we can afford to wait till you will be in a position to meet the amount. Hence, that's settled." The proper quality and quantity of the material were soon determined upon, and with the sincerest expressions of friendship and gratitude Catherine and her companion took leave of the genial storekeeper and his wife.

Mary was an expert seamstress, but she had no idea how to make a dress of which she had never seen the model. On their way homeward she told Catherine of her inexperience in making religious garments.

It was now Sister Catherine's turn to come to the

rescue. It just occurred to her that there was an old Sister of the Franciscan Order living alone at present at Nederweert, who had been expelled with her companions from the convent at Weert by the French revolutionists. She still preserved her religious garments very carefully, because she wished to be buried in them. "I do not know her very well," said Catherine, "but we might as well go now and pay her a visit. I don't think she will make any objection to our examining her habit for our purpose."

The poor old lady received her unusual visitors in a very friendly manner. As soon as she learned the object of their errand she was but too glad to show them the treasured objects. "Yes, indeed, you can see them," she answered musingly. "Here I have them all," she pensively continued, "these dear old things are my only hoard." One by one, she raised them fondly, as if they were living things, and explained to her visitors, whose eyes rested on her in mute sympathy, every detail of the dress, as well as she could. Mary took care to notice the peculiarities of every garment, but after leaving the worthy lady's home she confessed to Catherine. "The shape of that habit does not appeal to me, it is too complicated and minute."

A very unexpected event was about to remove every anxiety from Mary's mind by practically solving the problem of a pattern. A Franciscan Brother arrived at Heithuizen from the monastery at St. Trond, and was naturally introduced to the little community by Father van der Zandt. The Sisters in their peculiar perplexity about their religious dress, were overjoyed at this very opportune visit. It was just what Mary desired. She submitted his habit to a close scrutiny, and

with its every detail still fresh in her memory, the industrious seamstress began to work rapidly. Hurriedly she gathered every stray piece of stuff of no matter what color, and soon had her pattern ready. She looked at her product with a quizzical, yet satisfied eye. "I guess that will do," she pronounced. Suddenly, she stood before the assembled community dressed in her novel multicolored costume, properly retained at the waist by a common cord, her head adorned by a befitting veil. After the first few moments of astonishment caused by her unexpected appearance the Sisters critically examined her masterpiece. The general verdict was absolutely favorable. But when Father van der Zandt saw Mary he exclaimed: "What kind of spook is that?" Mary, not the least chagrined by this remark, explained that the garb would present a more pleasing appearance with the linen starched and the habit of one material, so he, too, finally submitted gracefully to the common sentiment and said, "All right, only see that you do not look like witches." This question being settled, Mary proceeded forthwith to manufacture the necessary garments for all.

After all the vicissitudes and trials of the past year, after all the anxieties and afflictions recorded during its transit: the year 1836 was now ushered in under the most favorable auspices. In fact, it was destined to become the YEAR OF YEARS in the annals of the congregation. St. Elizabeth's Convent became instantly the scene of unprecedented activity. Every inmate worked zealously in her own department, and in moments of leisure made herself useful wherever needed. Sister Mary was almost overwhelmed with work in her sewing room, but she remained most cheerful, despite

her increased task. The short days of January appeared doubly short to all in view of the great investiture which was to take place on the 11th day of February. The long expected day was casting its sunshine over this lively and yet recollected period of preparation.

Father van der Zandt has left us a few details of that memorable day, which will forever shine in our annals as the BIRTHDAY OF OUR CONGREGATION.

“After singing High Mass in honor of the Holy Ghost,” he writes, “I invested all the Sisters with the habit of the Order. They took on this occasion the following names:

Mary Catherine Daemen...	Sister Magdalene, Superior
Anne Mary Verkolen.....	Sister Clara
Mary Gertrude Kirkels.....	Sister Anthony
Mary Catherine Deckers.....	Sister Frances
*Mary Frances Steenkens.....	Sister Angeline

After all they had suffered and endured to see this happy day of their lives, it is impossible to convey by word or pen the sentiments and emotions these pious and devout women experienced when the solemn ceremony came to a close and they viewed one another for the first time in the dear garb of the Seraphic St. Francis. It was a holy joy such as this world can neither give nor conceive, blended with a profound sense of gratitude towards the Divine Master, which must have drawn upon them still more abundantly His graces and blessings.

*M. F. Steenkens, born at Bree, had joined the community after the removal to the Kreppel.

It was surely a touching scene filled with simple pathos, and the reader will find no difficulty, even at this remote period, of picturing it to himself in all its vividness. Catherine's aged form is bent low to the ground, as a living victim of heaven and earth. Her lips are pronouncing the solemn words of renunciation of the world and all it can give and her heart is silently chanting in rapturous transports the "Nunc dimittis servam tuam Domine, in pace. "Now dost Thou, O Lord, dismiss thy servant in peace." How many thousands of young lives since that memorable day have followed her footsteps and found under the rough habit of St. Francis, like her and her companions, a peace and happiness beyond the world's ken! Did Mother Magdalene, as we now may fondly call her, foresee the great future of her spiritual family, whose foundation-stone was her God-fearing humility?

In Mother Magdalene's diary for the years 1836 to 1839, there is an interesting personal entry of other happenings on that day, which, on account of the generous disposition dictating them, we cannot omit:

"Ik Maria Katharine Daemen stan myn Erfgoed af-en gef het an het Kloster. Maria K. Bongars stat her erfdel ok af en gef het an het Kloster. Anna Maria Verkolen stat her Erfgoed ok af en gef het an het Kloster."

In English: "I, Mary Catherine Daemen, surrender my patrimony and give it to the convent. Mary C. Bongars* likewise surrenders her patrimony and gives

*Her name occurs nowhere else, and she must have soon left, unless she be identical with Mary C. Deckers, which is very likely, because she evidently made her donation on this reception day whilst her name does not appear on the above list.

it to the convent. Anne Mary Verkolen also surrenders her patrimony and gives it to the convent."

St. Elizabeth was now an established convent, and its inmates began forthwith their regular life of voluntary poverty, not a very great sacrifice, considering their past privations and indigence, but a more perfect one by reasons of their promises to God.

Father van der Zandt appointed Mother Magdalene their first superior, and in that capacity she not only superintended faithfully the domestic affairs of the community, but kept also an exact record of all incidents of interest during her incumbency

According to the oldest accounts, the first title applied by the Sisters to the Kreppel was "The Convent of the Most Holy Heart of Jesus and Mary." It received its present appellation, "Convent of St. Elizabeth," in 1843. Definite reasons for this change of title, if there were any, are not given in the records.

CHAPTER X

THE FIRST NOVITIATE—CHANGES IN CONSTITUTION— FIRST YEARS OF RELIGIOUS LIFE.

“There are people who learn to be admired; and this is detestable pride. There are those who seek knowledge, to edify others, which is charity; and such as seek instruction for their own edification, which is true wisdom.” St. Bern. Serm. 36 in Cant.

How truly admirable is our Holy Mother, the Catholic Church, in her undying life! Like a mighty tree planted near living waters, she is ever young, ever green, ever vigorous. “ROMANUS SUM!” “I am a Roman,” was the boast of her citizens when Rome was at its height in pagan glory, and “I am a Catholic” is the pride of nearly three hundred millions of people, scattered over the world’s globe today. “Behold, I am with you till the end of the world” (Matt. XXVII, 20), is Christ’s promise to His Church, and His Spirit and Truth will continue to shine forth in her undying youth, for His promise secures her immortality against all the machinations of her enemies.

The world is astounded and cannot comprehend the ever-productive principle underlying the religious families formed under the fostering care of that Church. The intimate discipleship of Christ, who despoiled Himself of all, to sacrifice Himself totally for man, the sublime spirit of higher perfection, strange to say, exists scarcely outside the pale of the Church, but with her it has always been co-eval. In the religious families, sanctioned by the Catholic Church, the Savior’s sublime virtues and zeal for the salvation of mankind are

reflected with purest brilliancy. While the materialistic world naturally admires the attractive brightness of these virtues, so foreign to its tastes, it has lost sight of their origin, the unselfish superhuman love of Jesus crucified to uplift and save mankind. The spirit of self-abnegation, sacrifice and constant zeal, in the cause of God and His Kingdom on earth, living behind the convent walls, is an uninterrupted chain, linking one age with the other, and publicly demonstrates her sanctity. It animated St. Francis, St. Benedict, St. Ignatius, St. Theresa, St. Clare, and it continues to live in the spirit which moved Catherine and her companions to follow Christ in His poverty and was but a revival of that same spirit in past ages. Even the rules, by which their religious life was to be governed, were by no means a recent invention. The essential features of their constitutions had been handed down for almost three hundred years, and had been merely adapted to present needs and circumstances by Father van der Zandt and the Vicar-General.

It is as immaterial as difficult to determine exactly the source of our Constitutions. The rules of the Tertiary Congregations founded during the three last centuries are generally based upon the bull "Inter," issued in 1521 by Pope Leo X for all the members of the Third Order living in community. Our rules, however, remind us particularly of the constitutions outlined by the Rev. Peter Marchant, O. F. M.* for the Ven. Sister Johanna of Jesus, the first superior of the "Penitents

*Rev. Peter Marchant was born at Couvin, near Liege, in 1585. He entered the Franciscan Order in 1601, became commissary general for the Northern European Province, led a very austere life and was a strict observer of the Franciscan Rules; died at Ghent in 1651.

of 'St. Francis' of Limburg, Holland. A community of these Sisters had existed at Weert until its dissolution by the French revolutionists, when its inmates after a period of wandering, gradually reorganized and established a new convent at Oirschot. Apparently not all had followed the same course after their expulsion. Some had returned to their relatives and continued to observe their former rules privately. The old Sister whom Catherine and Mary consulted at Nederweert was one of these exiles. She now became, providentially, an important link in the chain which undoubtedly connects Mother Magdalene's Congregation with Sister Johanna's "Penitents of St. Francis."

At the earnest request of both Father van der Zandt and Mother Magdalene the old Sister came to Heithuizen and for some time took charge of the novitiate at St. Elizabeth. She brought with her copies of the Rules and Constitutions and Ceremonial of the "Penitents," parts of which were, little by little, embodied in the provisional statutes of the new organization. Hence the great similarity existing between the customs of our conventual life and those of the above-mentioned Congregation of Limburg. Many of our prayers at the investiture, the rules governing the kissing of the floor in the chapel, praying with extended arms, etc., are directly taken from the regulations laid down for them. Thus our Congregation, in its innermost life, may be retraced, root and branch, to an antiquity of more than three hundred years.

There exists, moreover, between the two organizations a perfect harmony in the religious garb as to color and material, though the form was taken from the Franciscan Brother, as related before. Father Marchant

writes: "The Sisters shall after profession wear a scapular over their garment and also a black veil, likewise, to remind them of the sufferings of our Lord and as a sign of their life of penance, there shall appear on the scapular a black cross with the instruments of the passion. They may also walk barefoot in wooden sandals. Their cincture shall consist of simple cords with three knots.* Their gown shall be long and not be distinguished by any peculiarity. The novices shall have neither a black veil nor a scapular, and instead of a cincture they shall wear a gray girdle. The lay professed Sisters shall not wear a black veil." These regulations were in the beginning absolutely adopted by our Sisters.

Some of the foregoing statutes were, however, soon changed by the Bishop of Liege. He was definitely opposed to going barefoot, and inserted that the professed choir sisters should wear a white veil underneath the black one. An additional change in the statutes was made before they received the approbation of Rt. Rev. John August Paredis, Bishop of Roermond, in 1860. He prescribed that all professed sisters without exception should receive a black veil, and since that time there exists no longer any difference of garb between the lay and choir sisters.

The very name adopted by our congregation forcibly reminds us of Father Marchant's "Penitents." Its first title was: "Congregation of the Sisters of Penance of the Third Order of St. Francis." The words "and of Christian Charity" are of much later origin,

*At first the knotted cord, following the example of the Dutch Franciscans, was worn at the left side. This has been changed after the union of all the Franciscans of the First Order, in 1897.

being added in 1869 through the instrumentality of Father Ignatius Jeiler, O. F. M. This distinguished translator of the Constitutions into German, in his letter to Mother Aloysia, then Superior General, recommended the change with the following words: "I have changed and simplified the title I have found in the old Constitutions by adding 'and of Christian Charity,' which will distinguish your Congregation from all the others of the Third Order."

There are, however, a large number of the original statutes in our Constitutions, sufficient to reflect the authors' intelligence and prudence, and to bring into relief Father van der Zandt's most sterling virtues, his genuine piety, keen discernment and the affectionate care with which he surrounded the infant society.

The Constitutions contained in Fourteen Chapters detailed regulations regarding the following points: 1. Obedience towards the Bishop; 2. Election of the Superior; 3. Reception and Profession; 4. Conversation and Relations with people of the world; 5. The Religious Garb; 6. Divine Services; 7. Reception of the Sacraments; 8. Work and Employment; 9. Silence; 10. Offices; 11. Care of the Sick; 12. Penitential Practices; 13. The Chapter; 14. Moral Obligations of the Constitutions.

They convey a true conception of the life led by our first Sisters, and its intimate similarity with the practices still in vigor in our Congregation. The sixth chapter, for instance, regulates Divine Services and the religious exercises. It prescribes that the Office of Our Blessed Lady shall be daily recited in common, and permits its somewhat quicker recitation on weekdays. It ordains that those, who for serious reasons may be hin-

dered from participating in the common recitation, must in place of the Office, say the "Our Fathers" prescribed by the rule of the Third Order. Matins, Lauds and the Little Hours are to be recited early in the morning, while Vespers and Complin should be said on Sundays at 2 o'clock and on weekdays at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. An hour in the morning and in the evening shall be devoted to meditation. In addition to the general fast-days of the Church, the twelfth Chapter makes other specially mentioned fast days obligatory. It advises particular mortifications for the time of Advent and Lent, which shall, however, not be practiced without the consent of the superior.

During the first few years the Office of the Blessed Virgin was recited in the Dutch language, but when Sister Teresa became Superior, the Latin language was substituted. As a matter of fact, some members of the little community were unable to read their prayers in any tongue. Sister Clara was totally illiterate, and Sister Anthony could read only with the greatest difficulty.

A brief and charming account of the fervor with which the early Sisters attended the recitation of the Office has been left us by Sister Elizabeth, who died in 1904. "Although Sisters Clara and Anthony were unable to participate actively in our daily Office," she relates, "yet they hastened at the first signal of the bell, with the others, to the chapel, where at the entrance to the choir they remained all the while on their knees in silent prayer. Mother Magdalene never absented herself, and at the least disturbance of the ceremonies, or at a faulty pronunciation of the words, her otherwise calm and friendly look would suddenly grow sad, whereas her eyes were radiant with happiness when every detail

had been carried out in a worthy and edifying manner. During the last years of her life, she always remained after the Office for a long time in secret communication with God."

The reader will readily understand that it was no small task for these good and simple Sisters to perform even in their mother-tongue "this service of the Angels," as Mother Magdalene fondly termed the Divine Office, and with the adoption of the Latin tongue for all the prayers in common, their difficulties naturally increased. But their sincere piety and zeal overcame every obstacle.

We may say the simplicity of St. Francis lived in happy St. Elizabeth's and remained the chief characteristic of all its inmates. Many an interesting story might be furnished, in illustration of this statement, but we will content ourselves with reproducing the incident related by Father Ignatius Jeiler, O. F. M., during a retreat he preached to the Sisters at Brunssum. It concerns the humble and childlike candor of one of the oldest companions of Mother Magdalene.

"On my way to Italy," he states, "I visited Heithuizen and was, for a few days, a guest at the convent. I must confess, I was charmed by the simple life of its inmates, but I was not ready for the surprise in store. Before I left St. Elizabeth's, Sister Mary quietly approached me and slipped a gulden (i. e., about 50 cents) into my hand, which she had earned by knitting and now intended with the superior's permission to send to the Holy Father. She begged me in all humility to be sure to give it to the Pope himself, to do with it as he pleased. 'But,' she added, 'I would be best satisfied if he would buy a bottle of wine with it for himself.'

“O holy simplicity!” added the Friar pathetically, “holy simplicity, thou wonderful flower totally unknown to the world, and unfortunately almost lost even to our convents, with what lovely splendor dost thou shine forth from that childlike soul in the quiet house on the heath.”

St. Elizabeth’s choicest blessings and material advancement flowed from just such simplicity. The Sisters’ life of penance and mortification received many an unusual jolt, and the good cook’s patience was often severely tested. “It was by no means a rare occurrence,” relates Sister Coleta, “that there was absolutely nothing to eat, nor money to purchase eatables, and, when the cook, as it commonly happened, went with her tale of woe to Mother Magdalene, the latter would smilingly give her customary words of encouragement: ‘My child, don’t worry; God will provide.’ ”

Many may deprecate such abandonment to God’s Providence, but God really did provide in every instance, and there was always help from somewhere. Bread, flour, potatoes, milk, invariably arrived in such good season that the Sisters never had to suffer extreme want. Of course, there was at no time a great choice of food, and with what was offered them, there existed every opportunity to practice self-denial and mortification.

“Those days,” writes Sister Crescentia, “were rich in every virtue. The very circumstances in which they lived, fostered in the Sisters an absolute reliance on God, a virtue attractively conspicuous in Mother Magdalene. She was the living example of every moral excellence they were called upon to practice. Her watchful eyes were ever alive to their weakness. When she noticed anxiety or discouragement on a Sister’s countenance,

she would like a kind mother approach her, gain her confidence, assure the troubled one of her prayers, and finally say with an encouraging smile: 'God is so good, my child, so very good.' No heart ever resisted the influence of her consoling words."

Father van der Zandt watched meanwhile every opportunity to procure any spiritual advantage possible to the little community. On the 28th of March, 1836, and again on the 28th of April, he earnestly entreated Bishop van Bommel to sanction a private chapel in the convent. "Our young community," he remarks in a postscript to the first letter, "is developing in a very satisfactory manner, both spiritually and materially. Eleven cells for Sisters have already been completed and we are just now busy erecting a small tower on the house, for which a bell has been donated. A number of other repairs have also been successfully made without increasing the debts.

Mother Magdalene's journal for 1836 refers unquestionably to the material used in the partitions of these cells. She shows in her entry of expenses an item for "sun-baked stones."

On the 3rd of May the much desired answer came from Liege. Vicar-General Kerckhoffs announced the Bishop's approval of the chapel as well as his permission for the daily celebration of Mass in the convent. We need not dwell upon the general feeling of joy it produced among all the inmates. A large room in the northwest wing of the building had already been prepared for the purpose, and vestments and other requisites had, according to Mother Magdalene's journal, been generously donated by the people of Hasselt and other neighboring places. The chapel was solemnly

opened on the 5th of May by Father van der Zandt, and on the 6th of May, 1836, the institution received its first rector, Rev. John van Kessel.

Another announcement of importance was contained in Father Kerckhoffs communication. He gave therein official notice of the Bishop's intention to visit Weert and the neighboring localities, "on which occasion," the letter concluded, "he will also inspect the new convent."

Bishop van Bommel did arrive at the appointed time, and was so well pleased with Mother Magdalene's progress, that he not only encouraged her personally, but also addressed the assembled Sisters in their private chapel, and exhorted them to continue faithfully the work so fortunately begun. Mother Magdalene has preserved some of the most impressive words the valiant Prelate pronounced on that occasion. "Be ardent in prayer, zealous in your work, and obedient. Every self-will must be buried ten feet under the ground. Keep your tongues pure and undefiled, and use them only to praise and glorify God."

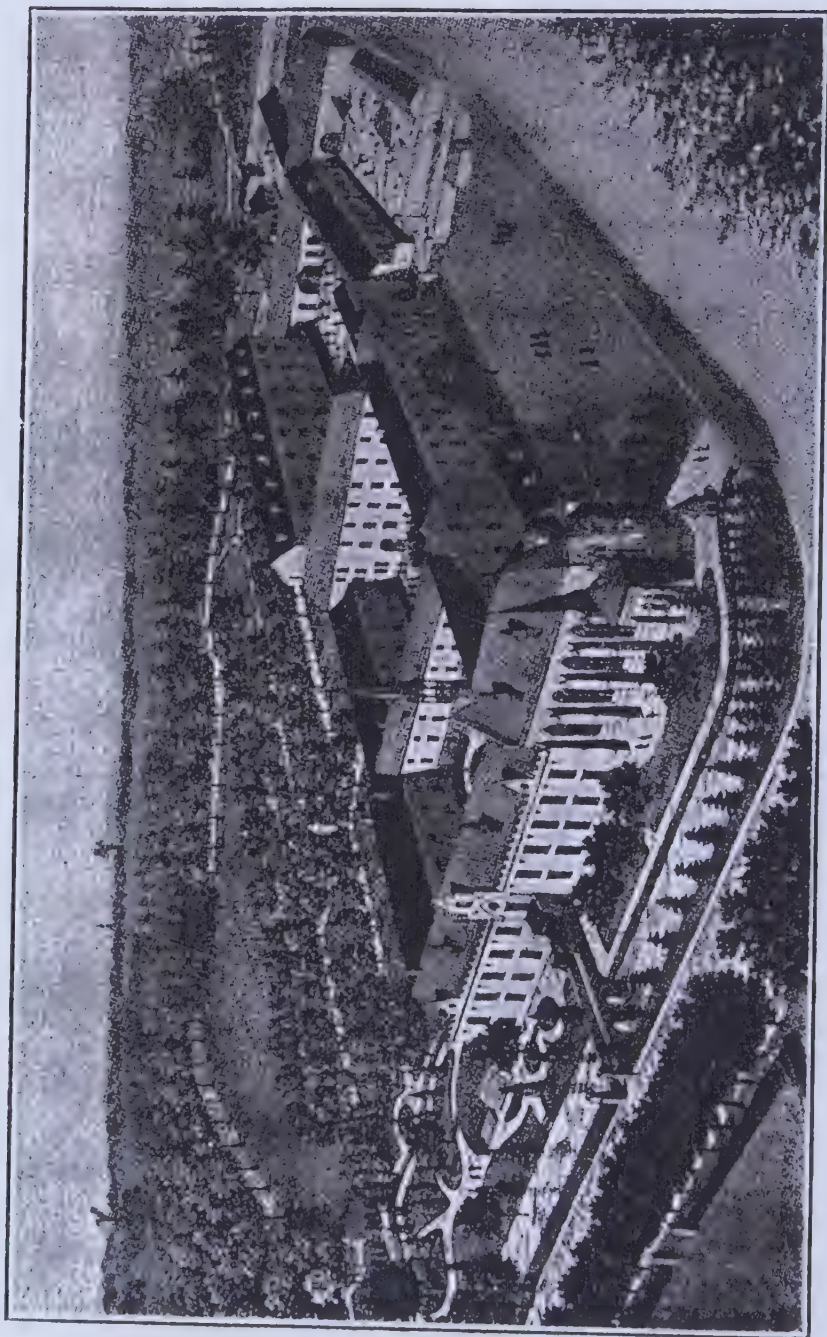
As soon as Sister Angeline had finished her novitiate she was admitted to her vows on the 13th of February, 1837. The other Sisters erroneously paid no attention to the difference between the vows of secular Tertiaries and those of regulars, and omitted to renew their profession. In her letter informing the Vicar-General of the solemn act, Mother Magdalene explains as follows "We have all made our vows forever under the former guardian Eleutherius and the Father Praeses." In the same letter she begs that Father van der Zandt be permitted to give the Sisters the general absolution, and to hear in their chapel the confession of the Sisters,

pupils, boarders, and all inmates of whatever description. She subscribes the letter as: "Magdalene, the unworthy superior of the poor convent of the Holiest Hearts of Jesus and Mary."

It was probably in consequence of this letter, and the statement it contained, that the ecclesiastical authority ordered, in 1839, a general renewal of their vows "for three years only." Mother Magdalene readily submitted to this order, and on the 11th day of June she and her first companions made their profession for the prescribed term according to the amended rules approved for the Tertiaries by Pope Leo X.

That Mother Magdalene at this still very critical period in the life of her community was full of hope and confidence is shown by a few lines she inserted in the above mentioned letter. "Everything," she says, "is progressing favorably under God's guidance. . . . Even our financial condition is improving. We have already paid 1,200 dollars of the purchase sum."

Father van der Zandt, on the other hand, was sometimes so far from feeling over-confident that he apprehended for the future. "For this reason," he records in his chronicle, "I applied once to the superior of the convent at Arendonck, near Antwerp, and requested a complete union between her organization and ours, hoping thereby to forestall a final ruin of Mother Magdalene's institution. This happened towards the end of 1837. My plan appeared, however, not to be God's plan. The superior of Arendonck, acting under the advice of the Very Rev. Provincial, positively declined the proposed absorption of our community. Sister Magdalene herself never lost confidence in Divine Providence, and always remained true to her motto: 'God will provide,' and God really has provided."



ST. ELIZABETH'S CONVENT AT HEITHUIZEN.

These last words of Father van der Zandt have been more than verified since they were chronicled, now more than seventy years ago. In truth, no one can read these chapters and compare Mother Magdalene's days of struggle for existence with the present condition of her spiritual family without being forced to admit: "God has helped." It was not in His design that the incipient cloister on the heath should become a dependency of Arendonck. St. Elizabeth's herself was to become the parent of numerous convents, and Mother Magdalene the spiritual mother of thousands of devoted daughters.

The work progressed quietly but safely under her wise guidance. In 1838, at the expiration of the lease, the whole manor came into the exclusive possession of the convent. Sisters Anthony and Frances now devoted their entire time to the farm and the adjoining grounds, and by the change they wrought soon demonstrated their ability and skill. Their exertions materially relieved the household, and under their supervision and care shade trees were planted, graveled path-ways and lawns adorned with flowers and shrubbery sprung into existence. In fact, when we view St. Elizabeth's to-day, with its lawns, well kept gardens and encircling walls of shady walnut and chestnut trees, we cannot form a true conception of the original neglected condition of the Kreppel, which the tireless labor and the industrious and skilled hands of our first Sisters have so marvelously transformed into a veritable paradise.

The following incident will serve to illustrate the love of work combined with a holy simplicity which filled the hearts of these good religious: Sister Frances often recalled with regret the five months she had spent indifferent to her vocation and she always looked for an

opportunity to do double work in order to make up for this neglect. After the park had been laid out, it was found necessary to dig a deep ditch for irrigation. The weather was extremely cold, yet the good Sisters worked indefatigably at the digging until they were almost overcome by the cold. One bitter cold day, Sr. Frances was found standing in the ditch, numb and exhausted, her clothing frozen to the ground. The Sisters carried her into the house and tenderly laid her in the bake-oven, where, as she laughingly remarked afterwards, "I was thawed out." It was a peculiar remedy, but one that proved satisfactory.

While some Sisters were thus constantly engaged in beautifying the exterior appearance of the manor, the others were no less zealous in the school, the curriculum of which embraced reading, writing, sewing, and knitting. The teaching-staff had lately received a most efficient associate in the person of Petronilla Rooyackers, of Melmund, born April 10th, 1810. "She was a very competent and industrious seamstress," says Father van der Zandt, "and she soon had the children of the best families in the school." The old Sisters always loved to speak of Mother Magdalene's happiness at her admission. "I have just received a candidate," she announced to her companions, "who is able to deal with God and men." Did she then foreknow that this same candidate who at her investiture, June 5, 1838, became Sister Theresa, was to be her successor as superior of the Congregation?

With the gradual increase of the number of its inmates a new problem soon confronted St. Elizabeth. More room was needed everywhere, especially in the chapel. Father van der Zandt, in view of their present

indebtedness and the additional expenses, thought the old barn might easily be transformed into a suitable house of worship, but Sister Theresa suggested a brand new chapel, and proposed a general house-to-house collection in Belgium for the purpose. The good pastor was by no means disinclined to follow her advice, nevertheless, he thought it wise to refer the idea to the prudent judgment of the Dean, Father Scheyven. After mature reflection both experienced clergymen agreed that the erection of an entirely new chapel, as well as the projected collection, were the right course to pursue, and that Sister Theresa herself would undoubtedly prove the most efficient person to undertake such a collection.

When the result of the conference was communicated to Mother Magdalene she readily consented with her usual submissiveness to her pastor. Although Sister Theresa had not yet finished her probationary year, she undertook her difficult mission cheerfully. With a letter of recommendation from Father van der Zandt, highly endorsed by Dean Scheyven, she began her arduous task in Spring, 1839, accompanied by Sister Angeline. It was a happy idea that the two solicitors first approached the generous, noble and influential Mr. De Neff of Turnhout, who was intimately acquainted with Sister Theresa's family. "He furnished her with a personal letter of introduction," says Father van der Zandt, "and next to God we owe him the great success of that collection, which netted nearly \$1,100.00."

Alas! The mission was not to remain without a very distressing consequence. While on their journey the two Sisters, foot-sore and tired, arrived late one evening at a farm house. The owner and his wife, owing no doubt to previous experiences, met them not only

coldly but with every sign of distrust, probably on account of Sister Angeline's rather masculine features, and would forthwith have sent them away, had not Sister Theresa so earnestly begged them for a night's rest in the parlor. Without anything to eat in their wearied and worn condition, that chilly night, on a bare floor, proved too much for Sister Theresa's delicate constitution. Her later severe sickness, which finally resulted in slow consumption, may undoubtedly be traced to that sad incident.

Happiness reigned at their return, and the work on the new chapel was now energetically begun. There were enough large trees on the property to furnish sufficient useful building material, and before many weeks passed the structure advanced towards its exterior completion. No one watched the progressing work with more joyful interest than Mother Magdalene, the pastor and the two solicitors of the funds who felt more than repaid for all their troubles by seeing their sanctuary completed.

But another agreeable surprise awaited the little community before the chapel was finished. On the 20th of June, 1839, His Lordship, of his own accord, granted the Sisters the great privilege of having the Blessed Sacrament permanently in their oratory. The formerly dismal Kreppel now became a truly favored spot, the former prison for men was now to house the Prisoner of Love, and the ribald songs and jests of drunken wretches were to be replaced by chants of praise to the Hidden God of Hosts. The new chapel, the Sisters were now erecting as His dwelling place among them, would soon be a haven of refuge in their troubles, worries and anxieties. They should henceforth confide their trials

and perplexities more intimately to His Sacred Heart, whose delight it is to be with the troubled children of men.

Sister Theresa's joy at the progress of the new structure was apparently destined to be short-lived. She became seriously ill, and it seemed almost as if God intended to demand the sacrifice of her life in exchange for her noble labor in His cause. The fond hopes Father van der Zandt and Mother Magdalene had both reposed upon her future usefulness appeared suddenly doomed when her sickness took a most dangerous turn, and brought her close to death's door. The zealous priest was very anxious to have her at least make her profession before her death, but somehow, there existed in the community a strong sentiment against Sister Theresa, and he did not dare, for fear of an unfavorable ballot, to submit her profession to the vote of the community. "I was afraid," he confesses, "that a general vote for this purpose would have proved against her," consequently, he permitted her on his own responsibility to make her profession before the end of her term of probation. "Thus," he continues, "despite the will of some among them, the Sisters retained her to whom in after years they owed the greatest debt of gratitude."

"It was like a ruse of the devil himself," his reverence declares, "that some of the older Sisters looked with disfavor upon Sister Theresa. Because they were constantly engaged in hard and laborious work, they considered Sister Theresa, who generally worked at embroidery and artificial flowers for churches, a mere idler, and it went so far that they judged her a useless member of the community." Fortunately, Sister Theresa herself had never noticed anything of this sentiment,

and now during her sickness Father van der Zandt tried with all his influence to change their mistaken ideas in her regard.

Contrary to all expectation, the patient recovered, and even regained her former strength rapidly. On the 5th of June, on the close of her probationary term, she was able to pronounce her vows in the parish church.

But God seems to have recalled her from the shadows of death merely to complete the work she had so successfully begun for him. Forced by necessity, the Sisters determined once more to invoke Christian charity, this time in Holland. A political change had taken place, and, says Father van der Zandt, "we all lived in fear and dread of being separated from Belgium and annexed by Holland, the roads to which country, heretofore guarded by a double row of Dutch soldiers, were now kept open."

Holland was to all appearances a very promising field of charity. His Reverence had learned many little stories of the splendid generosity of the Dutch Catholics from a friend, Father Greven, who himself had experienced exceptional acts of kindness whilst collecting funds towards the restoration of his parish church. This time Father van der Zandt consulted with Bishop Paredis, the Vicar Apostolic of the Province of Limburg, who not only heartily approved of this plan for the liquidation of the Sisters' debts, but furnished a personal letter of recommendation for this purpose.

In July, 1839, Sister Theresa, accompanied by Sister Josephine, set out once more on her errand of charity. The two solicitors wandered first through the Protestant Provinces of Groningen and Friesland, where they met with many rebuffs, and then turned with good success

to the Catholic centers. In his Chronicle, Father van der Zandt remembers with special gratitude the invariable kindness of the Franciscan Fathers towards the two Sisters. Their mission this time was profitable from a double point of view. It brought not only a considerable financial relief to the convent, but also a gradual increase of membership. By their travels, with the high recommendation of Bishop Paredis the little community became more widely known, and soon a number of applications for admission was received from the parts they had visited.

But before Sister Theresa had returned from her second mission a great change had been determined on at home, of which we shall speak at length in the following chapter.

CHAPTER XI.

MOTHER MAGDALENE'S HUMILITY.

She Resigns. Mother Theresa Succeeds.

"God has preserved the memory of them that are humble in mind." Ecclus. X. 21.

"If you would be truly great," says St. Augustine, "begin by being truly little. If you would attain the height of perfection, strive to arrive at the deep foundation of humility. The higher the structure we wish to erect, the deeper the foundation to be laid. The solidity of the superstructure depends on the solidity of the low foundation walls." (St. Aug., *sermo Xm de verbo Domini.*)

Humility has ever been the distinguishing mark and the most remarkable gem among the virtues of the true servants of God. Ever diffident of their own powers they attributed all their achievements to His might and wisdom, and were firmly persuaded that with other more docile instrument, God could have accomplished more for His own greater glory and the salvation of mankind.

When St. Theresa asked our Lord, why of all virtues he loved humility best, He answered: "Because I love truth." Now man is but an instrument in God's hands for the accomplishment of His designs. Hence whatever success he achieves belongs so truthfully and essentially to God, that He cannot and "will not give His glory to another." (Is. XLII. 8.) In very truth why should the instrument be allowed to take unto itself the glory due the activity of the Master who uses it? No human being is indispensably necessary to God,

who can accomplish His will even by the hands of His declared enemies. The Church of Christ itself was by God's power established upon the frail instrumentality of the Apostles. If the instruments chosen by God were always adequate to produce the great results we admire, a part of the glory essentially and inalienably due to Him might naturally go to them, which would prove an injustice to Him "who works all in all" (1 Cor. XII. 6.)

We are therefore in no way astonished to find in the life of Mother Magdalene an implicit confidence in God, most brilliantly united to a deep sense of humility. She had considered herself a mere instrument in the hands of God to begin His work, now she desired nothing more ardently than to resign her leadership that the accomplishment of His designs might not be thwarted. She attributed her unusual successes despite adverse vicissitudes so completely to her Divine Master that she was anxious to accept an inferior position under the dictates of another when she realized God's work could be more effectively promoted by one more capable than herself. Nor was she even then led by her own desire to obey rather than to be obeyed, but followed like a child the advice of her spiritual director, Father van der Zandt.

Circumstances had gradually developed the feasibility of executing the pastor's original idea, the creation of a boarding-school. The house had already been partly adapted for the purpose, the Sisters also had experienced a numerical increase, and His Reverence now advised Mother Magdalene to begin the new venture. Though the undertaking had long been planned, she grew thoroughly alarmed at its mere suggestion, because in her

modesty she deemed herself incapable of executing it. She felt herself naturally embarrassed when meeting people of any official station. She was always troubled when conversing with educated persons, and above all she thoroughly disliked a too frequent intercourse with the world. In her perplexities she had recourse to her hidden Master, from whom she sought light and guidance, and at the foot of the altar her determination to resign her office matured.

The chronicle of the congregation simply records that Mother Magdalene's wish to resign was prompted by "her desire to serve her Maker more undisturbedly in the quiet seclusion of her cell." Father van der Zandt avers that he also encouraged her to take this step.

The reader will recall how Mother Magdalene had readily recognized and openly commended the ability of Sister Theresa when she applied for admission into the community. Subsequent events and the cheerful activity of the Sister in promoting the best interests of the congregation had not belied that early judgment which was now thoroughly shared by Father van der Zandt. She was their common choice as a worthy successor of the retiring foundress. The day of the first solemn election of a superior according to the accepted constitution was fast approaching, and unless some effort was made, it was but too apparent that the unanimous vote of the Sisters would be in favor of Mother Magdalene, who possessed their absolute confidence and filial love. The zealous pastor was well aware that she would positively decline to reassume the ever-increasing burden, and fearful lest an unfortunate choice might endanger the work so happily begun, he determined to bring about Sister Theresa's appointment to that im-

portant post. After consulting with Dean Scheyven, who strongly favored his position, he therefore submitted most urgently the reasons for his selection, in a letter addressed to Bishop Paredis of Roermond, the Vicar Apostolic to the Province of Limburg.

The statutes of the congregation, approved by the Ordinary of Liege, permitted a direct interference by the ecclesiastical authority at any election, and provided that "the superior shall be elected by the Sisters for a period of three years, unless the Bishop determines otherwise." Father van der Zandt's request for the appointment of Sister Theresa was based upon this last clause of the statute.

On the 13th of February, 1840, Vicar-General Neven sent the following peremptory reply in the name of the Bishop:

"On account of the peculiar circumstances now prevailing in the convent of the Tertiaries at Heithuizen, we have deemed it most advisable at this time, not to permit the election of a superior by the Sisters themselves, but by virtue of our powers in these matters we hereby appoint as Superior Sister Theresa, nee Rooyackers, in whose piety, zeal and prudence we place great confidence in the Lord. This our appointment shall remain in force for a period of two years.*"

It now became Father van der Zandt's disagreeable duty to inform Mother Magdalene of the Bishop's decision. Though he had acted entirely in keeping with her own wishes, it appeared to him an act of unholy

*Mother Theresa remained in office for six years. Though there is no record of her re-election, the mortuary card avers that she was re-elected on the 26th of July, 1843.

ingratitude to depose her and to reduce her to the rank of a subordinate Sister. He confesses himself that the courage to perform this unpleasant task would have failed him, had not her unfeigned happiness at receiving the important news inspired him with confidence.

"The solid virtue and kindly disposition of Mother Magdalene," he writes, "gave me the necessary courage to undertake this ungrateful task. I asked her to prepare for the important communication by fervent prayer. Then I imparted to her the order of my ecclesiastical superior in the following words: 'Mother Magdalene, you have not in vain placed all your confidence in God's Providence. You are now growing daily weaker, and the burden of our establishment by reason of its constant development, is daily growing heavier. Your years are constantly advancing: you deserve to be relieved, and now God in his goodness has provided. . . . You have with the help of heaven succeeded in beginning and advancing your task, and have placed your establishment upon a solid foundation. Now let others complete the work. Sister Theresa has been appointed by the Ordinary as your successor. She will take your place.' A look of extreme satisfaction illumined her countenance while she listened to my announcement."

Mother Magdalene was indeed very happy at the joyful news which was so completely in harmony with her inmost desires. With a grateful heart she thanked her Eucharistic Lord for the favor, and gladly resigned her station, thereby setting a most brilliant example of humility before her present and future spiritual daughters.

"In very truth," exclaims Father Ignatius Jeiler, the eminent Franciscan preacher, "the humble foundress of the Congregation of Penance and Christian Charity has

ever practiced nobly and faithfully the most exalted virtues, but by her cheerful resignation of the holy work, around which centered her whole life, into the hands of others, her virtue shines forth in its most brilliant lustre."

But a task by far greater than that of securing the resignation of Mother Magdalene, confronted Father van der Zandt in his efforts to bring about the contemplated momentous change, upon which the future success of the congregation largely depended. Well he knew, as has been previously stated, that all the Sisters dearly loved their humble superior, and entertained towards her the submissive confidence of children, that it was consequently most trying to request the transfer of their loyalty to another guide. He realized, moreover, that there might still lurk with them some dislike against Sister Theresa, the superior of his choice. Her absence in the material interests of the organization had indeed contributed to dispel that feeling to some extent, but there were reasons to fear that her arbitrary appointment, instead of healing the wound, might revive the slumbering dissatisfaction. Finally, would Sister Theresa herself, in her enfeebled state of health, despite her very pronounced zeal for the welfare of the society, accept the office thus suddenly thrust upon her? The situation was certainly far from reassuring. In his anxiety Father van der Zandt turned to Mother Magdalene, and recommended the favorable solution of the difficulty to her pious prayers.

According to the itinerary, the two Sisters were to return from their collecting tour in the first days of March. Weert was to be the last place of their endeavors. Overjoyed at the success of their strenuous mission

and all unconscious of any changes at home, they arrived at that place, where they naturally paid a brief visit to the Franciscan Monastery. They were greeted with the strange intelligence that Dean Scheyven and Father van der Zandt had been anxiously awaiting their return, and earnestly desired to see Sister Theresa in a matter of importance. Alarmed lest something untoward had happened at St. Elizabeth during her absence, she entered the parlor, where she was soon joined by her pastor and his companion. Dean Scheyven now undertook the important task for which he and his friend had journeyed to Weert. In a fatherly manner he informed Sister Theresa of the contemplated change at home, and that she had been designated by the Bishop himself to succeed Mother Magdalene as the future Superior of the society. Silently she listened to the communication, not a word escaped her trembling lips, her consternation was extreme. "After that," remarks Father van der Zandt, in his own drastic style, "our whole meal was thoroughly spoiled." Only, little by little, did the two clergymen succeed in calming her troubled mind, and only gradually did they prevail upon her to give a reluctant consent.

The 7th of March, the day of Sister Theresa's return to Heithuizen after so prolonged an absence, was one of general joy. Though nothing had yet transpired regarding her sudden elevation she was received by all with every mark of sisterly kindness, and by Mother Magdalene with unusual affection. No discordant note marred her happy return.

The 12th of March, 1840, had been quietly fixed by Father van der Zandt as the day of her solemn introduction into office. On the previous day, he convened

the whole community, Sister Theresa excepted, and announced to them the Bishop's will regarding the coming election and the appointment by him of their new superior. While giving the all-important information his inquiring glance passed from one of his listeners to the other, but if he had expected a dissatisfied mien, his fears were quickly dispelled. The good Sisters had during her absence begun to fully realize the sterling qualities of Sister Theresa, and were but too willing to submit to the order of the ecclesiastical authority, which for them was the will of God. All prejudices against her had completely vanished.

The day following was truly a gala day at St. Elizabeth. Dean Scheyven had arrived early in the morning, and presided at the solemn function in the chapel. After invoking the Holy Ghost and addressing the community in a grave sermon, he read once more the Bishop's letter, and then formally declared Sister Theresa, nee Rooyackers, as their lawful superior. The young Mother received in a cordial embrace the homage of her spiritual children, the most touching feature of this reverential act being the fealty pronounced by dear old Mother Magdalene. Her eyes beamed with happiness and joy at the conclusion of the important event. The installation was indeed a feast of sisterly unity, peace and harmony. All were under the spell of the virtuous example of their humble foundress, whom they revered all the more for the act of obedience she had so generously performed.

Though removed from office Mother Magdalene, by her example, still remained a powerful factor in the life of her beloved children. They were the constant object of her fervent prayers, and her young Congregation needed her intercession most assuredly, all the more as its coming struggles and trials grew greater.

CHAPTER XII.

PROGRESS DURING MOTHER MAGDALENE'S LIFETIME.

Approval by Rome.

"I have expected and waited for the Lord, and He was attentive to me. And he heard my prayers, and He brought me out of the pit of misery." (Ps. XXXIX. 2.)

God blessed Mother Magdalene's undertaking visibly during the eighteen years of her still remaining term of life. Her Congregation took firm root and waxed strong not only in Holland but also in Germany. We may with much truth apply to her the words of the prophet: "*Leva in circuitu oculos tuos et vide: omnes istae venerunt tibi: filiae tuae de latere surgent. Tunc videbis, et mirabitur cor tuum.*" 'Lift up thy eyes round about, and see, and wonder in thy heart.' (Is. LX. 4, 5.)

Sister Theresa was scarcely 30 years old when she was called to assume the burden of directing the young Congregation, and during the six years of her active administration, with the very modest means at her disposal, she energetically laid the firm foundation for the future development of the institution.

Under her wise and resolute management, improvements were made in the main building, a new wing was added to the old mansion, a boarding-school was opened, a branch house was established, and the Sisters labored to advance in intellectual culture. "Every day," says Father van der Zandt, "witnessed some new material and intellectual progress. Everybody was astonished and complimented me, especially the Franciscan Friars

of the several parishes visited by Mother Theresa during her two journeys. Many came to inspect our institution, and in every case we gained new and active friends for our cause."

The chapel begun under Mother Magdalene was soon finished and dedicated by Dean Scheyven, and the second wing to the old mansion, containing the refectory kitchen and dependencies was completed in 1842. But the greatest impulse towards the realization of a good school was given about this time by the admission of four well-educated candidates. They appeared a godsend to Mother Theresa. An experienced teacher, a graduate of a normal school, also entered and under her able direction the four novices soon passed their teachers' examination. Above all, however, and more than the intellectual advancement of the Sisters, Mother Theresa kept alive and cultivated in the organization Mother Magdalene's spirit of simplicity and humility.

"The example of the Sisters," writes Sister Crescentia, "and their manifest spirit of self-sacrificing piety proved a strong incentive among their pupils. They naturally tried to imitate the virtues placed before them and of the twenty who entered the boarding-school during the first year, five at the completion of their curriculum applied for admission into the Congregation.

A great help to the intellectual advancement of the Sisters came through Father van Laer, the director of the Normal School at Roldue. He not only provided Mother Theresa with a detailed prospectus of studies, as required by all the larger cities of the country, but he also induced her to send a Sister and a postulant for further studies to the Sisters of Notre Dame at Liege.

Soon after the opening of the boarding-school the ec-

clesiastical authority permitted the Sisters for the first time to make their perpetual vows. Bishop Paredis had set aside the 19th day of July, 1842, the feast of St. Vincent de Paul, for this great event, at which he himself presided. Eighteen Sisters, among whom was the venerable foundress herself, were admitted to the solemn act. Father van der Zandt informs us in his "*Registrum*" that since then by order of the ecclesiastical authorities the Sisters have been permitted to make their perpetual vows immediately after their term of probation.

The solemnities of the investiture and the profession have thereafter taken place, according to circumstances, several times a year. Until 1854, Heithuizen alone enjoyed the privilege of these ceremonies, but since then it was gradually extended with the growth of the Congregation to other provincial and branch houses: Nonnenwerth, Germany; Stella Niagara, U. S. of N. America; San Leopoldo, Brazil, S. America; Samarang, Java, E. Indies.

About this time the statutes outlined by Father van der Zandt were definitely superseded by the old constitutions formulated by Father Marchant, O. F. M., for the Penitents of the Third Order. Although we are without any precise date concerning this change, we know that Father van der Zandt's recommendation of the Congregation to His Holiness Pope Pius IX was based upon that Constitution, which included among other regulations the recitation of the Roman Breviary and of the Matins at midnight.

This change seems to have been occasioned by Father Gaudens, O. F. M., who acted as the Sister's chaplain from February to December, 1843. His incumbency

was certainly of an immense value to the Congregation. "This pious and exemplary religious," remarks Father van der Zandt, "by his untiring zeal raised the exterior splendor of the religious life in our community to a most elevated height. Every day he instructed the Sisters in the proper manner of reciting the canonical hours and in the rubrics governing the choir. Under his direction they became perfect in the performance of that holy duty."

In spite of their daily, hard, and arduous labors they now begged Father van der Zandt to obtain for them the privilege of observing the canonical midnight hour, as prescribed by Father Marchant. The zealous pastor was too well aware of their daily hardships to encourage them, and consented only reluctantly to forward their petition to Bishop Paredis. Hence we are not surprised at the non-committal tone of his letter to his ecclesiastical superior, dated January 14, 1845.

"The Sisters of Penance of the local convent entreat me very persistently to obtain for them from Your Lordship the permission to observe the canonical midnight hour of the Holy Office; that thereby they might increase constantly in the practice of virtue, and in the fear of the Lord. Importuned by their solicitation I, therefore, refer their petition to Your Lordship and pray respectfully that such a request be granted, that by a closer observance of their statutes they may continue to advance in perfection."

The Bishop of Roermond answered promptly in a personal letter, dated the following day, January 15, 1845, as follows: "Complying with your petition, we hereby allow the Sisters to begin their canonical hours at mid-

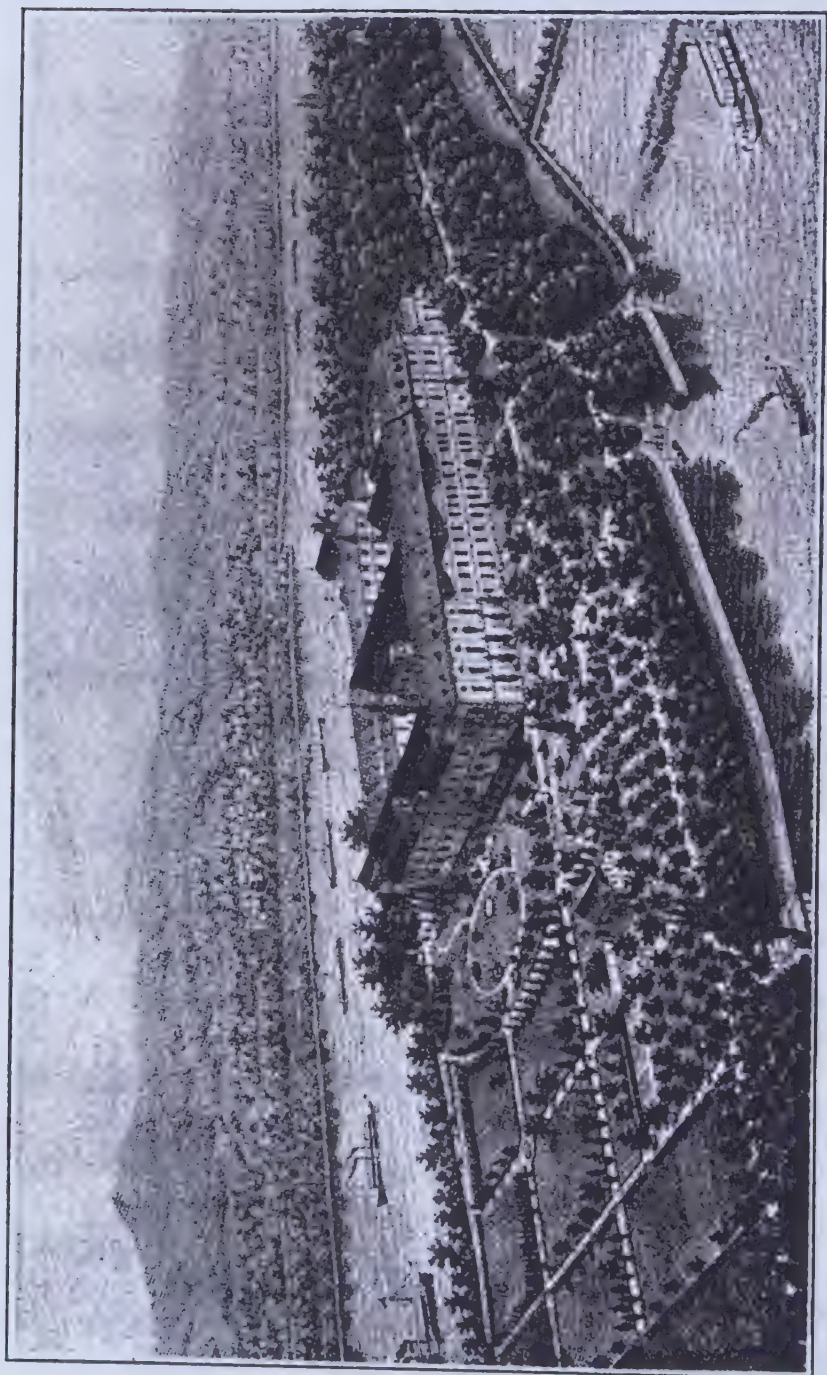
night. This permission is given at the special request and the discretion of the pastor.’’

For fifteen years the Sisters maintained the practice notwithstanding their daily, exhaustive work; and Mother Magdalene, despite her advancing years, was its most faithful observer. Its final discontinuance and the restoration of the original *Officium Marianum* was necessitated by the ever increasing demands on the physical and mental energy of the Sisters. But the Holy Office is, and must ever remain, a chief and exalted act of devotion in the Congregation after the example of its Venerable Foundress.

God called Mother Theresa prematurely away from the scene of her labors on the 20th of April, 1846. Though suffering from a slow and incurable disease, she was always cheerful, and never tired in her faithful work till the end. Around her deathbed were gathered Father van der Zandt and all the members of the sorrowing community, including Mother Magdalene. She was only thirty-six years old at the time of her death.

A general election two weeks later, May 5th, 1846, placed Mother Bernardine, nee Mensink, in charge of the Congregation, which at this time numbered twenty-eight Sisters. During the thirteen years of her administration she erected no less than nineteen branch institutions both in Holland and in Germany, and had the great happiness of witnessing the approval of the Congregation by the Holy See.

It was naturally the most ardent and cherished desire of both Mother Magdalene and Father van der Zandt to have the now rapidly growing Congregation recognized and sanctioned by the highest authority in the Church. Though the ever vigilant pastor had at vari-



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ous times and in various quarters made strenuous efforts to that end, he had till then been unsuccessful. He now determined to address himself directly to the Sovereign Pontiff. Towards the end of 1851 he submitted a lengthy petition to Pius IX, a part of which is here reproduced on account of the historical information it contains.

“Since the year 1835 there exists in my parish an association of pious women of the Third Order of St. Francis, to whom the Bishop of Liege, under whose obedience we then stood, granted the permission to wear the habit of the Third Order of Penance, and to live according to Father Marchant’s reformed constitutions, as approved by Pope Urban VIII, on the 15th day of July, 1634. Our Rt. Rev. Bishop Paredis, The Apostolic Administrator of Limburg, under whose jurisdiction we now live, has renewed the said approval. The pious association has meanwhile so happily increased that it now exists in five separate convents, and on account of the most edifying life of its members it is continually solicited to form other branch houses not only in Holland but also near Munster in the Prussian Province of Westphalia.

“But, though the members of the said organization are by their vows obliged to observe a thoroughly religious life with the sole exception of the rigorous inclosure, from which owing to circumstances they have been dispensed, they greatly regret that their Congregation has not yet received the high approval of Your Holiness. Your petitioner asks, therefore, Your Holiness most urgently, to deprive the association, no longer, of this signal favor, but to accept its members among the number of the religious Tertiaries of St. Francis, to give them your

approval, and to endow them with the privileges and indulgences heretofore accorded to said Order.”

Pope Pius IX referred the petition to the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda, which in its session of the 23rd of September, 1852, accepted the following resolutions to be submitted to the Holy Father:—

“1. To beseech His Holiness to unite and raise all the establishments of the said pious association, either now existing or to be erected with the Bishop’s consent, to the dignity of a religious Congregation with simple vows, under the appellation of Tertiaries of St. Francis, and to confer on the said congregation the power to receive novices, who at the termination of their probationary year may be admitted to the simple vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, this temporary approbation to remain in force till such time when the written rules and constitutions receive the definite approval of the Holy See.

“2. To beseech the Holy Father to grant the new Congregation all the personal indulgences, which have been heretofore granted the Brothers of the Third Order of St. Francis.”

His Holiness Pius IX, in an audience given on the 3rd day of October, the vigil of St. Francis, willingly granted the favors requested. The execution of the papal decree was, however, delayed until the vigil of Christmas and did not arrive at Roermond till the middle of January, 1853. Bishop Paredis, through his secretary, Father Boermans, immediately transmitted the important news to Father van der Zandt, and in his letter of the 26th of January urgently requested him “to take, without further delay, the necessary steps and perfect the rules and constitutions which you wish to have ob-

served by your spiritual daughters, that they may be submitted to the Holy See for their final acceptance."

We need not dwell on the effect produced by the official intelligence both at Heithuizen and in the several branch institutions. Wherever it went the message evoked sentiments of gratitude and happiness. It was an especially gladsome event for Mother Magdalene, our humble foundress. Her countenance beamed with joy, and her heart was full of gratitude towards Him who now, through His representative on earth, had so signally blessed her work. The society at the time of this its first recognition by the Holy See numbered eighty professed Sisters and seven branch institutions.

Without entering into the details of the constitutions, which are entirely based on the Bull of Pope Leo X for the government of all the Tertiaries of St. Francis, and the detailed elaboration of which consumed a number of years, we will merely state that the rules of the Order were finally and definitely approved by Pope Pius IX, on the 5th of September, 1869.

CHAPTER XIII.

MOTHER MAGDALENE'S LAST YEARS.

Her Virtues.

"The just shall increase in a fruitful old age: and shall be well treated that they may show how righteous is the Lord, our God."

Relieved of all responsibilities, our saintly foundress now spent the remainder of her days in a still closer union with her Maker. The choir and her cell became exclusively her places of predilection. Whenever the rule, of which she was ever a strict observer, did not require her much-sought presence among her companions, she could be found either in the chapel or in her cell. The latter plainly evinced her love of poverty. In addition to a simple hard pallet of straw, it revealed only a little table and a common chair. The walls were entirely unadorned with the exception of a crucifix and two unartistic pictures hung over the lowly couch. Yet this poorly equipped chamber was her paradise, where hidden from the sight of all, she tried by prayer and meditation to come daily into closer communion with her Heavenly Spouse, to Whose service she had so generously dedicated her whole life and her entire being. No mortal will ever know what spiritual favors and graces she received from God in that happy solitude.

Prayer soon became almost exclusively her occupation. Owing, no doubt, to the continuous, wearisome labors she had been compelled to perform since her childhood, and the extreme cold and the excessive privations she had endured in the cause of charity, during

her earlier life, she gradually grew so feeble that she could scarcely participate even in the lighter manual work of the community. A few years after her resignation her trembling hands were no longer able to safely direct the sewing and knitting needle. But as her physical strength for the material service of the community decreased, the more familiar grew her trembling fingers with the beads of her rosary. This excellent instrument of prayer, according to common testimony, was her constant friend. She was never seen in her leisure moments without reciting it. The beautiful relief surmounting her tomb reproduces her in this familiar attitude. She usually sat thus engaged in a remote part of her cell with her back turned to the door, so as not to be disturbed in her loved devotion.

Sometimes Mother Magdalene would walk in the convent garden either alone or in company with the other Sisters. On such occasions, she would invariably end her promenade before a little shrine of St. Francis, located in a small niche of the enclosure. Not unlike the Seraphic Founder of the Franciscan Order, she dearly loved the little songsters of the trees.

For St. Francis and St. Anthony, she entertained a special affection and devotion; and we may add that both these devotions have remained her legacy to the Congregation. Several of our most flourishing houses have since risen under the particular auspices of St. Anthony, who by his powerful intercession has ever proved himself a faithful guardian and a mighty protector of the Society. It is, therefore, in no way surprising that with their Seraphic Founder he has obtained a prominent place of honor and affectionate devotion in Mother Magdalene's institutions.

Exterior recollection and modesty were constantly practised by our pious foundress. She understood with all the saints that interior fervor and piety cannot long endure without severely guarding the senses. Her ever downcast eyes never surveyed her closest environments. In fact, it is positively averred that from personal inspection, she probably never knew the exterior improvements of her own convent buildings. When the noise of the hammers and crowbars reached her cell, she would casually ask what that meant; and when in reply Mother Theresa or some other Sister informed her of a contemplated change, she answered with a satisfied nod or smile, or a fervent: "Thanks be to God for all His goodness!"

Mother Magdalene's desire was to be totally ignored by all. Sister Pacifica explicitly tells us that she begged of God that He might allow her to pass through life quietly and unnoticed, and not to favor her externally with any extraordinary graces. This prayer God saw fit to answer only in part. Indeed, He Who looks down with love upon the sincerely humble and lowly, did sometimes manifest to others the great graces with which He favored His devoted Servant.

At times she was so totally lost in contemplation as to be wholly insensible of any occurrences around her. Sister Coleta relates that she once went to her cell to notify her that a visitor wished to see her in the parlor; and not finding her there she looked for her in the chapel. There in the choir she found Mother Magdalene, kneeling with arms extended, raised in the air, entirely unconscious of her presence and completely absorbed in God.

Secular persons have repeatedly testified that Mother Magdalene would sometimes stop abruptly in the

middle of a conversation, and for a time remain absolutely oblivious of their presence. After a short time, she would regain her natural expression and continue the conversation as if nothing had happened.

Mother Bernardine, the successor of Mother Theresa as Superior General, reports the following incident: "When, in 1848, my sister visited me at Heithuizen, I naturally showed her the different parts of our institution, and finally desired her to meet our Venerable Foundress. We walked towards her cell, and after knocking for admittance, I opened the door. An unusual sight greeted us. Mother Magdalene had neither heard our knocking, nor was she conscious of our presence though we did not interrupt our conversation. But as soon as I called, 'Sister Magdalene!' she immediately replied: 'What is it, please, Reverend Mother?' rose from her knees and greeted us with her usual pleasant smile."

It can scarcely be doubted that on various occasions God revealed to His servant hidden events, and permitted her to penetrate in a mysterious manner the secret thoughts of her loved companions.

We have already stated that Mother Magdalene was apparently never concerned in the improvements of the convent buildings. Yet, when Father van der Zandt, during the incumbency of Mother Bernardine, commenced the construction of a new addition, the pious foundress one day stopped the superior suddenly with the following words: "Reverend Mother, what are they building? That does not agree with the plan I have seen." Three years later that addition had to be demolished and reconstructed. During its rebuilding, when the masons were nearing the end of their labors, Mother

Magdalene again addressed her superior as unexpectedly as before: "Reverend Mother, that new building is now all right. It is true to the plan I have seen!" This addition, which contains classrooms for the boarders, a manual training hall and an oratory of the Blessed Virgin, has remained unaltered to this day.

"In my interior struggles, during my novitiate," writes Sister Celestine, a subsequent superior of the mother-house, "our Venerable Foundress by her prayers often relieved me in a wonderful manner. Although I never betrayed in any way the perplexities of my soul to her, she approached me one day of her own accord, tapped me sympathetically on the shoulder and said: 'Have good courage, Sister Celestine, and trust in God. It will all end well. I am praying for you.' These few words at that particular moment were of the greatest benefit to me on account of my unreserved confidence in Mother Magdalene's prayers. I firmly believe I owe my perseverance in my vocation to her intercession."

Whilst still in the Novitiate, Sister Theatildis, a future Novice Mistress, on account of her feeble health, thought the end of her life was very near. She therefore asked Mother Magdalene to pray for her, that she might die well. The pious Foundress, however, answered: "No, my child, you will not die yet, but live for a long time, for you have a great work before you."

Mother Bernardine once asked Mother Magdalene to offer her prayers for the happy ending of a very grave difficulty, which, however, for reasons she did not disclose to her. It really concerned a much slandered and maligned priest, who to escape his calumniators had gone to a Trappist monastery, thereby still more encouraging his slandering persecutors. Mother Magdalene promised

to pray daily in Mother Bernardine's intention, and to offer a novena for her purpose. A few days later, the latter had, unexpectedly, to undertake a long journey and at her return to St. Elizabeth, she asked Mother Magdalene whether she had not forgotten the promised prayers. What was her astonishment when she received the following answer: "Reverend Mother, don't worry. The priest for whom I have prayed is a very saintly man." Within a very short time Mother Bernardine received news of the priest's death. The Trappist monks assured her that he had died a holy death, and that they had never given hospitality in their monastery to a more excellent priest.

The motto "*Serva regulam et regula servabit te*" "Keep the rule and the rule will keep thee" governed Mother Magdalene's whole life. She was especially exact in punctually attending the recitation of the Holy Office, and always performed that duty with the utmost recollection and devotion. Her zeal in this regard was so great that not even her final sickness, from which she suffered many a year, prevented her attendance at that loved exercise. On the very eve of her death she challenged her remaining strength, and appeared in the choir to recite the office for the last time with her companions.

Her virtue was always natural, simple and attractive. A look into her calm, cheerful countenance, which revealed the imperturbable and profound peace of her soul, was ever sufficient to inflame the Sisters with renewed courage to fulfill their sometimes arduous duties, and to inspire them with the necessary enthusiasm for their noble calling. Superiors and equals alike revered and loved her sincerely. She seemed, however, so little

aware of her exceptional position that she never ventured to give a positive advice even in matters vital to the Congregation. When asked for her sentiment in any matter, she would modestly limit her encouragement to the assurance of her prayers for its success. She was at all times deferential and a living example of respect for the authority of her superiors.

Two years after her retirement from office she shared with others the happiness of being admitted to the perpetual vows. We can rather imagine than fitly describe the fervor with which she prepared for this solemn act of her life, for which her soul had longed so ardently. God alone understood her feelings, when at the foot of His altar, she vowed before His Representative, to give herself forever to her hidden Master. None of the many resplendent lights surrounding His humble throne in the brilliantly illumined sanctuary consumed itself by its own flame more completely than did the heart of Mother Magdalene under the influence of her love for the Master. Truly, there is nothing more lovely and inspiring in the realm visible or invisible, than to behold the free and irrevocable sacrifice of self on the altar of God's love! And if it be true that God will never be outdone in generosity, what graces must He on that day have showered upon humble Mother Magdalene, who advanced to the altar of sacrifice not merely with her own personal offering, but led eighteen other faithful souls, animated by her example, with the same generous spirit!

This memorable event of her life incited her still more to the practice of every virtue. "Indeed," remarks Sister Crescentia, "it is difficult to state which was her favorite virtue. I must crave Mother Magdalene's pardon; but I will here frankly confess to her

greater honor an act of guilty curiosity. I foolishly determined one day to observe her very closely with the decided intention of detecting some imperfection in her daily life and actions. I did keep my resolution faithfully; but to my confusion be it said, I discovered nothing worthy of the least reprimand; so strictly was her whole conduct in keeping with the prescribed regulations."

If we were, however, to cull the choicest flowers in the garden of her virtues, her firm confidence in God, her childlike simplicity and her profound humility must unquestionably attract our immediate attention.

Her absolute confidence in Divine Providence, of which her entire life gives evidence, is touchingly admirable, and was so inspiring to others that amidst the severest trials of her Congregation, it always sustained the wavering hearts of her companions, and filled them with consoling hope. "God will provide!" her favorite expression of sublime confidence, always dissipated fear and worry till through the dark clouds of affliction shone the bright star of hope.

The greatness of Mother Magdalene's humility is brilliantly demonstrated in a little incident related by Sister Coleta. "Rector Canters," she says, "who, perhaps, feared that the great spiritual favors bestowed by God upon his servant might have made her proud, or perhaps also to try her humility, one morning passed her intentionally when she presented herself with the other Sisters at the communion rail. Whoever knew Mother Magdalene's ardent desire to receive her Divine Master, appreciated the crucial test. Without murmur or complaint, the humble servant of God returned to her place. She never questioned the priest's right to refuse her Holy

Communion and therefore never mentioned the distressing occurrence in any manner."

By the constant subjection of her senses and the continual practice of every virtue, based upon the only solid foundation of all perfection, humility, Mother Magdalene daily laid aside untold treasures for heaven to the moment of her saintly death, which will form the subject of our next and last chapter.

CHAPTER XIV.

MOTHER MAGDALENE'S DEATH.

Her Place of Rest.

"In this peace I shall sleep and rest, for Thou, O Lord, hast singularly established me in hope." (Ps. IV. 9, 10.)

Eighteen long years had passed since Mother Magdalene laid down the burden of her office; eighteen long years of childlike obedience under the will of her superiors; eighteen long years of prayer and most intimate union with God; eighteen years of varying trials and vicissitudes to her Congregation, whose every joy and sorrow found an echo in her maternal heart. Her greatest consolation during all these years had been that the society had received, in 1852, the approbation of the Sovereign Pontiff. For this signal blessing her heart felt intensely grateful to God.

If God, during her lifetime, had allotted to Mother Magdalene numerous adversities, He had also granted her numberless favors. He had led her through darkness to light, through the most trying struggles to victory, He had endowed her with almost superhuman energy, undaunted strength of character, and an unlimited confidence, He had given her to taste the bitter cup of ridicule and adverse censure, and chastened her firmness in the crucible of distrust and disappointment, she experienced at the hand of her trusted companions. Despite all adverse fortunes, her institution expanded, and had already begun its world-wide campaign in the cause of Christ and His Church. God had granted her

the remarkable favor of seeing it securely established. But scarcely had He permitted her to witness the dawn of a greater future for her daughters, when He demanded the sacrifice of her life.*

Born on the 19th of November, 1787, she now had almost reached the seventy-first year of her life. Her once robust constitution had at last completely yielded, less to age than to the affliction which God had seen fit to send her during the last few years of her life. She bore these trials with the utmost patience and resignation to God's Holy Will. Dropsy of the chest and a consequent weakness of the heart had asserted themselves. Medical aid had been summoned, but the disease had not been checked. At length it assumed such alarming symptoms that the attending physician declared that death might result at any time. Far from being frightened by his verdict, Mother Magdalene calmly prepared for a sudden call of her Master. At her own request Rector Canters, in the presence of all the Sisters, administered to her the Sacrament of Extreme Unction in the choir of the chapel just before the beginning of the Divine Office. She received the last rites of the

*An interesting incident might be fittingly inserted here. Shortly after the seventeenth convent had been founded, the wife of the Mayor of Heithuizen called on Mother Celestine, the Superior of the Motherhouse, and inquired after Mother Magdalene. The visitor earnestly requested to be permitted to speak with her. "It will be the last time," she said sadly, "for Mother Magdalene is going to die soon." Being asked to explain herself, she related: "One day some thirty years ago as I was passing the place where Mother Magdalene and the Sisters were constructing the first little convent, I heard Mother Magdalene say, 'God will provide. Out of this little house seventeen convents will spring up before my death.' I remembered these words when I heard about the last foundation, and have come to see her once more before she passes out of this world."

Church with unusual fervor and devotion, the calm serenity of her countenance betraying her heart's desire for heaven. The holy act completed, she joined her companions in the recitation of the Breviary. It was the last time she was to chant with them on earth the praises of God.

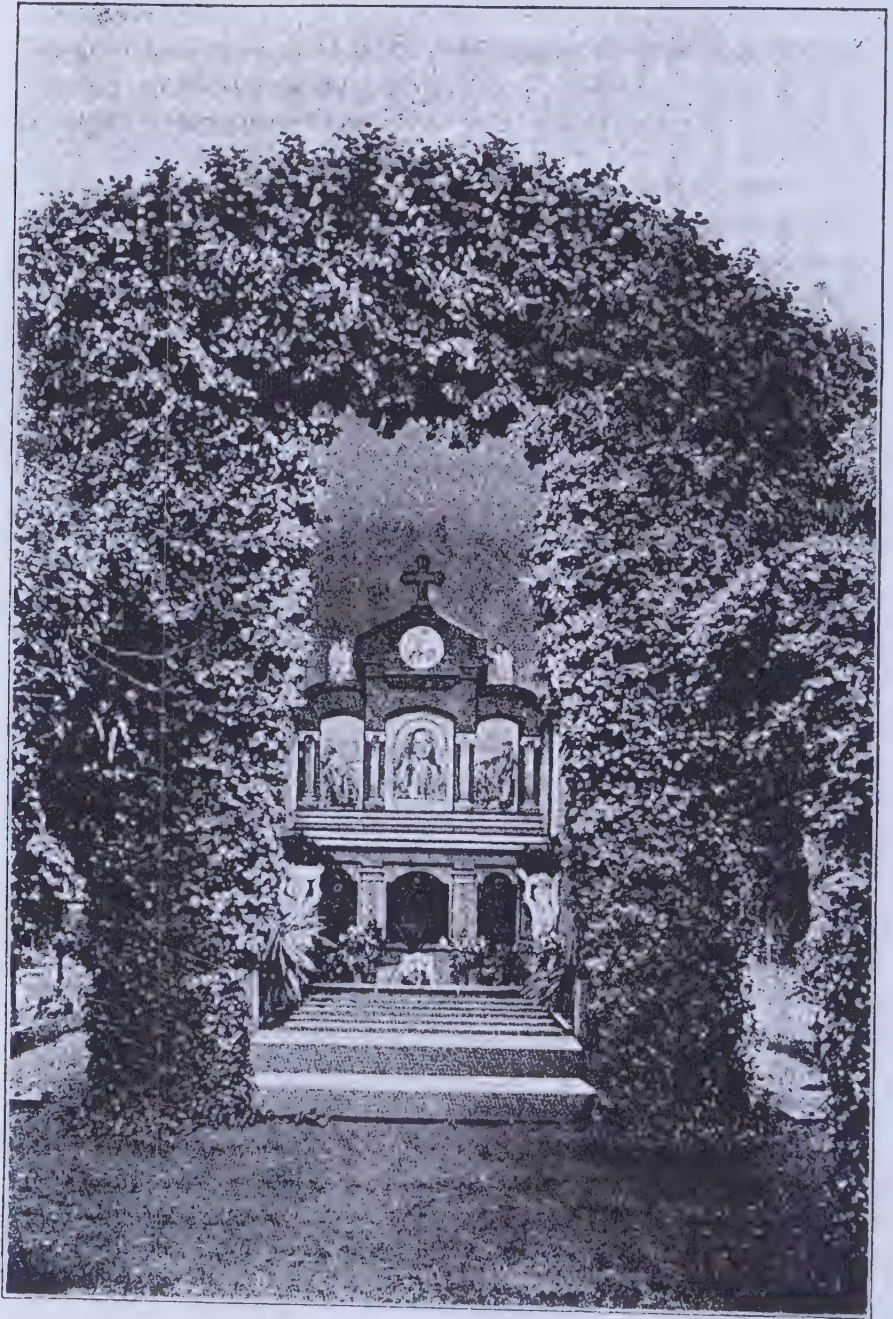
On the following morning, August 7, 1858, Mother Magdalene made a supreme effort to rise at the appointed hour, but her bodily strength was no longer able to meet the demand of the will. She was forced to return to her lowly pallet, and had to forego the happiness of appearing at her wonted place in the chapel. The angel of death was fast approaching.

When at three o'clock in the afternoon Mother Celestine entered her cell she found Mother Magdalene, her eyes closed, reciting to herself, slowly and distinctly, various disconnected verses of the psalms. Though there was then no apparent danger of death, Rector Canters was immediately notified. He found no cause for alarm, and after speaking for a little while to the patient, he inquired whether at the last Holy Communion she had made the intention of receiving as her Viaticum. "Yes, indeed, Your Reverence," she firmly answered, "I did that at every Holy Communion." "If tomorrow you are still alive," he continued, "I'll bring our Blessed Lord here to you." "In that case," Mother Magdalene rejoined with a grateful smile, "Your Reverence may make your own intention, and I offer my Holy Communion for that intention." "O, not at all!" exclaimed Father Canters, "your Holy Communion tomorrow is for yourself and not for me." After giving her his blessing the priest retired.

At four o'clock the bell gave the signal for vespers

in the chapel. "I went to the choir," reports Mother Celestine, "but scarcely had we begun our Office when I was hurriedly called to Mother Magdalene's bedside, and informed that she was dying. As on the previous occasion, I found her praying so fervently and devoutly that I did not dare to disturb her by prayers of my own. Quietly I approached her bed and bending over her, I asked in a whisper: 'Mother Magdalene, do you really wish to leave us?' Without opening her eyes, she smiled kindly, and answered very plainly: 'Just as God pleases.' I then asked her to pray for us all in heaven. 'Yes, indeed,' she replied, 'I'll do that!' Those were her last words. A few moments later she had surrendered her soul to God. She slumbered away quietly and peacefully without a sigh or struggle, like a weary child going to rest in the embrace of its parent. It was little more than four o'clock and it had all happened so quickly that the Sisters remained undisturbed at their Office."

When speaking of the death of his mother, St. Monica, St. Augustine has the following remarkable word: "I did not think it right to bewail her demise with tears and laments, because in her death there was nothing lamentable. Indeed, I did not think she died at all when I consider her life and her faith. God merely removed her from my intercourse with her." In like manner Mother Magdalene's daughters, as soon as informed of her demise, sorrow indeed at being deprived of her intercourse, but the blessed hope that she lived in God's peace and the certainty of her loving intercession in heaven filled them with consolation. She had gone to her eternal reward, rich in merits and deserts, to rest from her sufferings, labors, and trials; and in the light



MOTHER MAGDALENE'S TOMB.

of this faith it seemed wrong to grieve for her. They all felt the loss of her edifying companionship, and hence, a grave silence, undisturbed by marks of exterior sorrow, pervaded St. Elizabeth's Convent.

Mother Magdalene had passed away; yet she still lives; her memory will never die. Dying she left behind her, as a heritage to her spiritual daughters, the example of a life of self-sacrifice, and prosecution of a work for which God's Providence had evidently raised her in her time and day, while she, with a mother's love will continue to watch over them. But her protecting prayers and love will not only surround her immediate companions and fellow workers; they will embrace with equal affection the countless hosts of all who in time to come will, after her example, join the ranks of her spiritual daughters and seek the salvation of their own souls by sacrificing themselves, following her example, for the souls of others, as members of her spiritual family. Her companions fully realized that her intercession with God was more powerful now than while she dwelt on earth with them, a conviction since then wonderfully strengthened by many extraordinary facts which, for various reasons, we will refrain from enumerating. We hope the day may soon dawn when the true merits of humble Mother Magdalene will illumine, with their brilliant lustre, not merely her own daughters, but the whole world as well.

Three days after her saintly death her mortal remains were interred in the little convent graveyard. Thither her loving children frequently direct their steps in tender remembrance of their Mother, and in pious pilgrimage to crave her intercession. How true sound the words of the Royal Psalmist: "*In memoria aeterna erit justus,*

dispersit dedit pauperibus justitia ejus manet in saeculum saeculi.” “The just shall be in everlasting remembrance, she distributed and gave to the poor; her justice remains for ever and ever.”

When her Congregation, in May, 1885, celebrated the golden jubilee of its existence at Heithuizen, and delegates had gathered from the different lands to which it had extended, Mother Magdalene's grave received a befitting and worthy recognition. Mother Alfonse, the Superior General, had prepared the way towards erecting on that solemn occasion a becoming monument to the immortal memory of our venerable Foundress. Several branch establishments had generously responded to her appeal, and contributed their mite to this cause of filial affection, and now, when Mother Magdalene's daughters had assembled from afar to celebrate the fiftieth birthday of their Order, the unveiling of that monument was to form the climax of that memorable anniversary. One memorial was to mark the last resting place of both Mother Magdalene and her first protector, Father van der Zandt. He had gone to his eternal reward at the mature age of 86 years on the 12th of May, 1870, and his body had found a resting-place near the humble Foundress' grave in the little convent cemetery.

Both graves were re-opened, and the remains were reverently placed into separate oak boxes lined with zinc, and a neater tomb was constructed. To-day, only a thin cement partition separates the mortal remains of the two beings whose lives were so providentially linked together, in giving life to our Congregation. Two documentary records of the event, executed on parchment and duly attested by Rev. Rector Franssen, Mr. G. H. Leus, a great benefactor of the community, Mother Pa-

cifica, the local Superior, Sister Rosalia, the Mistress of Novices, and the two oldest members of the Community, were enclosed in two small bottles, which were then sealed with the seal of the Congregation and placed with the remains of the revered dead.

Here on the 10th of May, 1885, the principal day of the jubilee, the handsome monument, a true work of art, was unveiled. It shows on its front two artistic medallions containing reliefs of Mother Magdalene and Father van der Zandt. On each side of these, two grouped pictures reproduce Mother Magdalene distributing alms to the poor and instructing little children. The Dutch legend on the monument, originally composed by Father van der Zandt, in memory of our Venerable Foundress, but later altered to include himself, reads as follows:

Here at the dying Savior's feet
Thy founders, St. Elizabeth,
Rest side by side, in death they meet,
Who living gave thee life on earth,
And were thy models heavenward,
While pausing here recall their deeds,
And pray that they may rest in peace.

The last resting place of these two loved ones will ever remain a treasured spot for Mother Magdalene's children. It attracts them by its inspiring associations, kindles anew filial affection, and by the very air that hallowed tomb seems to breathe, it has ever quickened in them her spirit of humble self-sacrifice. In no place do they seem so near her interceding presence, as at the foot of that place of rest.

CHAPTER XV

VENERATION OF MOTHER MAGDALENE AFTER HER DEATH.

Some Favors Obtained Through Her Intercession.

“Though it be good to hide the secret of the king: it is honorable to reveal and proclaim the works of God.” Tobias XII, 7.

No one can read the thirty-sixth psalm of David without being deeply impressed by his remarkable chant of praise and of confidence in the immutable fidelity of God. The royal prophet celebrates the retributive justice of the Creator, and extols the final triumph of the just over the seeming success of the worldling. While the glory of the latter perishes with him, God's power reveals the true value of his servants by preserving their memory. “Commit thy ways to the Lord,” he exclaims, “and trust in him; he will bring forth thy justice as the light and thy judgment as the noonday. Envy not the man who prospers in his way, and does unjust things. I was young, and now I am old, and I have never seen the just one forsaken. I have seen the wicked exalted and rising proudly like the cedar on Lebanon. And again I passed by, and behold he was no more: I sought him, and his place was no longer found” (Ps. XXXVI). “The just shall live in everlasting remembrance; but the aspirations of the wicked shall perish” (CXI).

These words of the Royal Prophet resembles a eulogy upon the life of the heroic Mother Magdalene. The keynote of her kindly nature was the accomplishment

of God's designs quietly and unobtrusively, and to pass unobserved in the midst of her companions. This natural modesty was her greatest charm. It attracted instinctively and powerfully all who came within her influence, and engendered genuine veneration and love for her. Everybody became naturally conscious that under her simple exterior there lived one of God's privileged souls.

After her saintly death this devotion born of affection, far from waning, was stimulated by a no less natural confidence, that as soon as she would arrive in the sight of the Master, her intense love for the work she had established would manifest itself, and that her prayers to God's throne would primarily be for those who had already followed her footsteps, or who would at her example follow her life of self-sacrifice. In this her daughters were not disappointed. Indeed, many a Sister by invoking her intercession has experienced strength, help, and light in moments of grave doubt. God Himself by His power has surrounded the memory of Mother Magdalene with undying glory.

It is not improbable, however, that the favors obtained through the intercession of the humble servant of God would never have come to light had not Mother Ludmilla, the present Superior General (in a circular, issued in 1911), requested all the communities of the society to fully report all such extraordinary favors with a view of having them preserved for the introduction of Mother Magdalene's cause in Rome. This circular brought to evidence numerous testimonials showing forth God's merciful intervention at the intercession of his devoted servant.

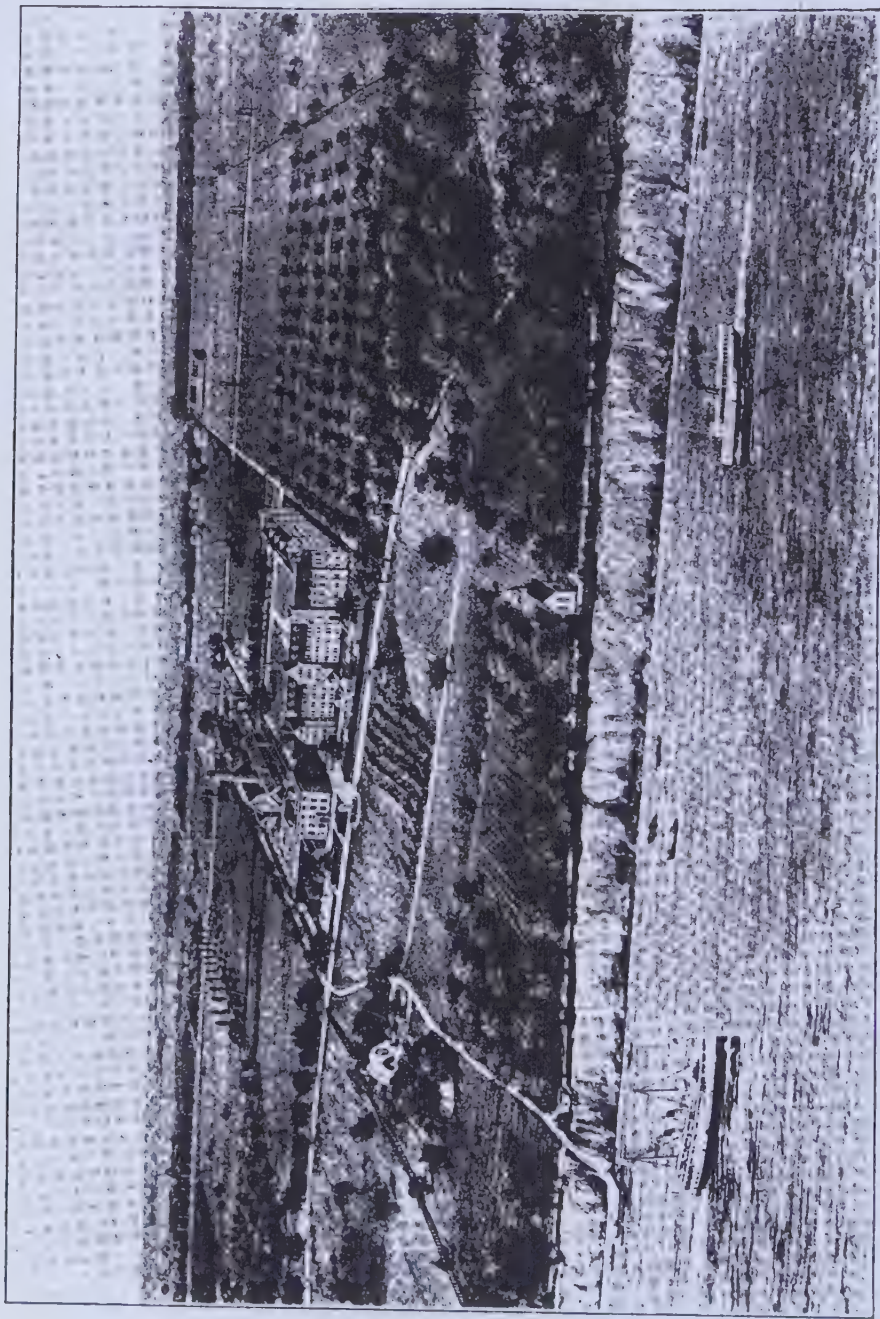
The collection of all these reports to the Mother House

forms a splendid bouquet of never-dying love and of the veneration of her spiritual daughters towards their saintly Foundress. With the Prophet we may truly say: "The just live in everlasting remembrance."

While it is not our intention to reproduce all these testimonials of extraordinary favors, we cannot forego the pleasure of submitting some to the pious reader.

A Sister of the convent at Treves (Germany) relates as follows: "In December, 1909, a little boy suffering with an inflammation of the brain was confided to my care. The first operation he had to undergo was apparently quite successful; but, contrary to the calculations of the attending physician, the fever increased day by day. Nor did a second operation produce the desired change in the patient's condition. A third operation took place on the 2nd of January, 1910; after which the doctor still entertained some hope for the life of the boy, provided the fever abated. Again his hopes were doomed. The symptoms were possibly more unfavorable, and the fever continued to increase. Finally the doctor declared the case beyond his skill and a recovery absolutely impossible.

I felt greatly dejected at this verdict, and at the same time, I was inspired with the fullest confidence that our good Mother Magdalene by her intercession with God, could save my little patient. I immediately asked several of our Sisters to unite with me in a novena to our Beloved Foundress and requested the little sufferer to join his prayers to ours. On the 3rd of January, quite contrary to all expectations, the fever fell to 98° F. and the boy was saved! Ten days later he was able to rise, and soon left the hospital completely cured. The physician, Dr. Poschmann, has repeatedly



NORTH AMERICAN NOVITIATE.—STELLA NIAGARA, N. Y.

declared that the cure was the result of Mother Magdalene's intercession.

A Sister of the academy at Zeddam (Holland) gives the following extraordinary fact concerning herself:

"On the 3rd of August, 1880, our physician, Dr. Schumaker, declared me a consumptive, and ordered me to give up all school work. Owing to the very evident symptoms, his diagnosis was but too convincing and I was sent back to the Mother House to prepare for death. Though I myself was fully satisfied with the fatal ending of my disease, I did not lose courage. During my sojourn at the Mother House I had recourse to Mother Magdalene, to whose tomb I frequently went to pray, and my confidence was rewarded. My health came back to me, not suddenly, but gradually without the use of any medicine; and in April, 1881, I was again at my former post, fully able to resume all my lessons."

Mother B., the superior of St. John's School, Columbus, Ohio, writes:

"On the 2nd of January, 1910, Father Weisinger, our parish priest, informed me that on the previous evening one of our pupils, Hilda Busch, had received the last rites of the Church. I went to visit her immediately after Mass. The fever was so intense that her lips were almost black. When I called her by name, she opened her weary eyes, and said imploringly: 'I don't want to die yet; please pray for me!'

"The attending physician had diagnosed a most serious inflammation of the lungs; and despite all the remedies applied, the sickness made such rapid progress that on the 4th of January the prayers for the dying were recited at her bedside. All hope of recovery had vanished.

"The scene was indeed most distressing. Hilda's father, himself an invalid for more than a year, wept bitterly. The trial God had seen fit to impose upon him was all the sadder, because the 15-year-old sufferer was his only daughter.

"Finally I exhorted the disconsolate parents to join me in a novena to our foundress, Mother Magdalene. We began our devotion immediately and soon an improvement in the young patient's condition became noticeable. Her total recovery followed in a very short time."

In a letter dated October 19, 1910, Mother B. writes again:

"Mr. Busch called at our convent and wished to see me. I went to the parlor, and after the customary greeting, he stated the object of his visit as follows:

" 'I have come to fulfill a promise I made to Mother Magdalene whilst I was sick. I promised that I would give towards her cause, that is to say, to defray the expenses of her beatification, the first wages I would earn, if I should regain my health. Last week, for the first time in two years, I was able to work, and here I bring my first wages.' The poor man handed me two dollars. 'It is little,' he explained, 'but I'll do more when Mother Magdalene has finished the cure. I have not passed a day without addressing myself to her, and I intend continuing to do so, because I am absolutely convinced, and I could swear she helped me.' "

Deeply moved, Mother B. accepted the gift and sent the two dollars for the said intention to the Superior General in Europe.

Sister Eleonore sent the history of a very remarkable cure from Konitz, Germany.

“Sister Alcantara,” she writes, “who for long years had been the most trusted and experienced nurse in our St. Borromeo Home, gradually lost her strength, and grew very feeble. Increasing attacks of violent coughing caused her excruciating internal pains, and reduced her to such a point that our two physicians positively declared she must cease all work.

“Complete rest and the remedies applied seemed at first to bring about the desired result. The patient was slowly recovering. But suddenly an intestinal trouble caused a serious relapse, and necessitated an operation. The latter was pronounced a complete success; but the doctors had discovered a worse evil, a tubercular condition of the worst kind, which made us fear her case was hopeless.

“Finally, we had recourse to our foundress, our beloved Mother Magdalene, and full of confidence in her intercession, we began a novena with the patient. Our trust was not in vain. In a few days a marked improvement in her condition became visible; soon her cough stopped altogether and her strength and healthy color returned. After a few weeks of rest she was again able to fully resume all her former duties.”

To this short list of extraordinary favors obtained from God through the intercession of Mother Magdalene we might add a number of others no less remarkable; but we will refrain from chronicling them lest we might forestall the judgment of Holy Mother Church.

By manifesting His power at her intercession, God has thus Himself kept alive among men the memory of humble Mother Magdalene; and the mite of the stricken poor has contributed to advance a cause for which the prayers of the entire Order are every day most fer-

vently offered: The Beatification of Their Beloved Foundress, Mother Magdalene.

CONCLUSION.

More than 75 years have elapsed since the humble but energetic servant of God, Mother Magdalene, without any visible means laid the foundation of her organization, and entrusted its life and development to Divine Providence. Succeeding events have more than justified her motto, "God will provide." In very truth, He has visibly blessed the work so trustingly made His very own by its saintly foundress. His paternal goodness has ever supplied the lack of human means. It is undoubtedly due to His Providence that the Congregation now presents to the world an extremely vigorous branch of the tree planted nearly 700 years ago by the seraphic St. Francis. Rooted in the cardinal principles of the Patriarch of Assisi, humility and penance, it has already borne abundant fruit for the glory of God and the salvation of souls wherever it has spread, and has been a powerful support of the cause of Christ Crucified.

To enable the reader to form an idea of the magnitude of Mother Magdalene's work we here add the present statistics of her spiritual family.

AFFILIATED HOUSES OF MOTHER MAGDALENE'S CONGREGATION.

PROVINCE OF HOLLAND.*

No.	Name and Address.	Founded.	Field of Labor.	
1.	St. Elizabeth's Convent.....	1835	Novitiate	
	Heythuizen, near Roermond		Boarding School	80
	Diocese of Roermond			
2.	St. Mary's Convent.....	1848	Normal School	110
	Mook, near Nymwegen		Elem. School	96
	Diocese of Roermond		Kindergarten	71
3.	St. Anthony's Convent.....	1848	Boarding School	59
	Oldenzaal, Province of Overysse		High School	10
	Archdiocese of Utrecht		Elem. School	470
			Sewing School	80
			Kindergarten	232
			Mechan. School	1237
			Hospital	93
			Home Patients	6256
4.	Immac. Conception Convent..	1856	Elem. School.	198
	Neeroeteren, near Maeseyck		Sewing School	40
	Diocese of Liege, Belgium		Kindergarten	75
5.	St. Joseph's Convent.....	1857	Boarding School	79
	Brunssum, near Sittard		Elem. School	142
	Diocese of Roermond		Kindergarten	40
6.	St. Catharine's Convent	1858	Elem. School	505
	Almelo, Province of Overysse		Sewing School	163
	Archdiocese of Utrecht		Kindergarten	165
7.	St. Clara's Convent.....	1862	Boarding School	50
	Silvolde, Province of Gelderland		Elem. School	325
	Archdiocese of Utrecht		Sewing School	48
			Kindergarten	50
8.	St. Clara's Convent.....	1863	Elem. School	700
	Heerlen, Province Limburg		Kindergarten	250
	Diocese of Roermond			

*The numbers following the different fields of labor indicate the number of souls cared for by the institution.

No.	Name and Address.	Founded.	Field of Labor.
9.	St. Ann's Convent..... Wyk-Maastricht Diocese of Roermond	1863	High School 340 Elem. School 300 Sewing School 54 Kindergarten 410 Mechan. School 85
10.	St. Anthony's Convent..... Valkenburg, Prov. Limburg Diocese of Roermond	1865	Elem. School 250 Sewing School 30 Kindergarten 130
11.	St. Elizabeth's Convent..... Huissen, near Arnhem Archdiocese of Utrecht	1866	Elem. School 260 Sewing School 20 Kindergarten 101 Old Ladies' Home 32
12.	St. Joseph's Convent. NederWeert, Prov. Limburg Diocese of Roermond	1866	Elem. School 252 Sewing School 21 Kindergarten 62 Home 41
13.	St. Aloysius' Convent..... 's Heerenberg, Province of Gelderland Archdiocese of Utrecht	1866	Elem. School 272 Sewing School 35 Kindergarten 160 Hospital 31
14.	St. Joseph's Convent Thorn, near Roermond Diocese of Roermond	1875	Elem. School 26 Sewing School 16 Kindergarten 130
15.	Sacred Heart Convent..... Eemnes, Prov. of Utrecht Archdiocese of Utrecht	1875	Elem. School 74 Sewing School 8 Kindergarten 41 Church Regalia
16.	St. Joseph's Convent.. Zeddam, Prov. of Gelderland Archdiocese of Utrecht	1876	Elem. School 172 Sewing School 32 Kindergarten 90
17.	Our Lady H. of C. Convent... Haarlem, Prov. N. Holland Diocese of Haarlem	1882	Boarding School 45 Elem. School 570 Sewing School 75 Kindergarten 294
18.	St. Magdalene's Convent..... Heithuizen, near Roermond Diocese of Roermond	1889	Elem. School 152 Sewing School 20 Kindergarten 94

*The numbers following the different fields of labor indicate the number of souls cared for by the institution.

No.	Name and Address.	Founded.	Field of Labor.
19.	St. Francis' Convent.....	1895	Elem. School 85
	Jutfaas, near Utrecht		Sewing School 16
	Archdiocese of Utrecht		Kindergarten 45
			Church Regalia
20.	St. Anthony's Convent.....	1903	Elem. School 480
	Utrecht		Sewing School 60
	Archdiocese of Utrecht		Kindergarten 210
21.	St. Bavo Convent.....	1904	Elem. School 293
	Haarlem, Prov. N. Holland		Sewing School 95
	Diocese of Haarlem		Kindergarten 209
22.	St. Ann's Convent.....	1910	Elem. School 140
	Ospel, near Weert		Sewing School 10
	Diocese of Roermond		Kindergarten 68
23.	St. Gerard Majellus Convent.	1914	Hospital 21
	Zeddam		
	Archdiocese of Utrecht		
24.	Sacred Heart Convent.....	1914	Lyceum 26
	Amsterdam		Boarding School 3
	Diocese of Haarlem		Sewing School 5

(b) EAST INDIES.

25.	St. Joseph's Convent.....	1870	Novitiate	
	Samarang, Java Island		Orphanage	239
	Diocese of Batavia		Elem. School	104
			High School	280
			Kindergarten	120
			School for Col- ored Children	22
26.	St. Francis Xavier's Convent.	1879	Mission School	296
	Larentoeke, Flores Island			
	Diocese of Batavia			
27.	Sacred Heart Convent.....	1900	Boarding School	100
	Mageland, Java Island		High School	248
	Diocese of Batavia		Sewing School	58
			Kindergarten	155
28.	Immac. Conception Convent..	1902	High School	156
	Djocdjakarta, Java Island		Sewing School	25
	Diocese of Batavia		Kindergarten	58

*The numbers following the different fields of labor indicate the number of souls cared for by the institution.

No.	Name and Address.	Founded.	Field of Labor.	
29.	St. Francis' Convent..... Langgoer, Kei Islands Diocese of Batavia	1905	Mission School	77
30.	Christ Child's Convent..... Mendoet, Java Island Diocese of Batavia	1908	Mission School	97
31.	Holy Ghost Convent..... Samarang-Bangkong, Java Island Diocese of Batavia	1908	Normal School Boarding School Training School Kindergarten	88 50 180 75

THE GERMAN PROVINCE.

(c) Germany.

32.	Holy Cross Convent.... Freckenhorst, near Warendorf Diocese of Münster	1852-1876 refounded 1888	Boarding School Domestic Science School Kindergarten	45 34 60
33.	St. Bernardine's Convent. Cappellen, near Geldern Diocese of Münster	1852-1876 refounded 1882	Insane Asylum Kindergarten	190 95
34.	St. Clemens' Convent Nonnenwerth, near Roland- seck, on-the-Rhine Diocese of Treves	1854	Novitiate Lyceum and Boarding School Domestic Science School	 150 10
35.	Our Lady Help of Christians' Convent M. Gladbach Archdiocese of Cologne	1854	Hospital Domestic Science School	3793 40
36.	St. Elizabeth's Convent..... Treves, Böhmerstr. Diocese of Treves	1854	Old Ladies' Home Home Patients Care of Poor Kindergarten	20 1250 200
37.	Sorrowful Mother Convent... Linz, a. Rh. (Rhine) Diocese of Treves	1854	Hospital Insane Asylum High School Domestic Science School Needle-work School	60 60 165 10 27

*The numbers following the different fields of labor indicate the number of souls cared for by the institution.

No.	Name and Address.	Founded.	Field of Labor.
38.	St. Bruno's Convent..... Karthaus, near Treves Diocese of Treves	1856	Domestic Science 30 Boarding-School 30 Old Ladies' Home 11 Home Patients 226 Sewing School 110 Kindergarten 140
39.	St. Irmgardis' Convent..... Süchteln, near Viersen Archdiocese of Cologne	1856	Hospital 210 Home Patients 145 Orphanage 13 Kindergarten 90
40.	St. Ann's Convent..... Remagen (Rhine) Diocese of Treves	1866	Domestic Science School 68 Old Ladies' Home 19 Sewing School 75 Kindergarten 65
41.	St. Borremeo's Convent. Konitz, Westprussia refounded Diocese of Kulm	1867-1875 1885	Hospital 995 Orphanage 30 Kindergarten 130
42.	St. Martin's Convent..... Linz, Rhine Diocese of Treves	1867	Home Patients 800 Old Folks' Home 50
43.	St. Joseph's Convent..... Prüm, in the Eifel Diocese of Treves	1869	Hospital 250 Home Patients 315 High School 66 Domestic Science School 30 Kindergarten 80
44.	Holy Cross Convent..... Bünde, near Maastricht Diocese of Roermond	1876	Boarding School 50 Domestic Science School 16 Elem. School 96
45.	Immac. Conception Convent.. Marienwerth, near Maastricht Diocese of Roermond	1879	Boarding School 32 Domestic Science School 30 Old Ladies' Home 5 Technical School 65
46.	St. Ann's Convent..... Elderfeld-Mirke Archdiocese of Cologne	1885	Orphanage 170 Domestic Science 25

*The numbers following the different fields of labor indicate the number of souls cared for by the institution.

No.	Name and Address.	Founded.	Field of Labor.
47.	St. Aloysius Seminary..... Prüm, in the Eifel Diocese of Treves	1887	Care of the Household of Diocesan Semi- nary
48.	St. Joseph's and St. Barbara's Convent Neuwerk, near M. Gladbach Archdiocese of Cologne	1889	Hospital 150 Home Patients 1200 Orphanage 40 Kindergarten 80 Painting School 80 Domestic Science School 32 Old Ladies' Home 6
49.	Mary, Star of the Sea..... Remagen (Rhine) Diocese of Treves	1892	Home Patients 740 Hospital 285
50.	St. Francis' Convent..... Oberwinter, near Rolandseck Diocese of Treves	1892	Hospital 30 Home Patients 80 Emb. School 25 Kindergarten 60 Orphanage 20
51.	Immac. Conception Convent.. M. Gladbach Archdiocese of Cologne	1895	Lyceum 505 Kindergarten 250 Technical School 48
52.	St. Anthony's Convent..... Lüdinghausen, Westphalia Diocese of Münster	1895	Normal School 96 Academy 110 Domestic Science School 17 Boarding School 100 Emb. School 40 Kindergarten 80
53.	Sacred Heart Convent..... Treves Diocese of Treves	1897	Hospital 1190 Domestic Science School 32 Emb. School 1135 Kindergarten 130
54.	St. Joseph's Convent..... Honnef, on-the-Rhine Archdiocese of Cologne	1900	Lyceum Day School 80 Boarding School 162 Sewing School 25

*The numbers following the different fields of labor indicate the number of souls cared for by the institution.

No.	Name and Address.	Founded.	Field of Labor.
55.	St. Joseph's Convent..... M. Gladbach-Hermges Archdiocese of Cologne	1903	Home Patients 2408 Sewing School 55 Kindergarten 110 Technical School 120
56.	St. Joseph's Convent..... Fohren, near Treves Diocese of Treves	1904	Orphanage 117 Sewing School 75 Kindergarten 85 Home Patients 1019
57.	St. Anthony's Convent..... Wegberg, near M. Gladbach Archdiocese of Cologne	1905	Hospital 68 Home Patients 884 Sewing School 80 Kindergarten 120
58.	Immac. Conception Convent.. St. Mary's Home Konitz, West Prussia Diocese of Kulm	1906	Domestic Science School 86 Orphanage 30
59.	Convent of Our Lady of Good Counsel, Eschweiler Archdiocese of Cologne	1906	Lyceum Day School 210 Boarding School 160 Commer. School 44
60.	Sacred Heart Convent..... Elberfeld, Carnap street Archdiocese of Cologne	1906	Home Patients 2076 Sewing School 275 Kindergarten 100
61.	St. Francis' Convent..... Windberg, near M. Gladbach Archdiocese of Cologne	1908	Sanitarium for Consumptives 1000
62.	St. Irmgardis' Convent..... Süchteln, near Viersen Archdiocese of Cologne	1909	Lyceum Day School 95 Boarding School 150 Sewing School 25 Kindergarten 90 Technical School 64
63.	St. Joseph-Elizabeth Convent. Mulheim, Rhine Archdiocese of Cologne	1909	Orphanage 160
64.	St. Francis' Convent..... Capellen, near Geldern Diocese of Münster	1911	Hospital 7 Home Patients 612

*The numbers following the different fields of labor indicate the number of souls cared for by the institution.

No.	Name and Address.	Founded.	Field of Labor.
65.	Sacred Heart Convent.....	1912	Home Patients 1355
	Beeck, Erkelenz Co.		Sewing School 72
	Archdiocese of Cologne		Kindergarten 56
			Technical School 60
			Domestic Science School 11
66.	St. Francis' Convent.....	1913	Sewing School 215
	Homburg, on-the-Rhein		Kindergarten 200
	Diocese of Münster		

(b) BRAZIL.

67.	St. Joseph's College.....	1872	Novitiate	
	Sao. Leopoldo		Boarding School	50
	Archdiocese of Porto Alegre		Elem. School	82
68.	College of the Sacred Heart.	1874	Boarding School	60
	Santa Cruz		Elem. School	141
	Diocese of Santa Maria		Colored School	23
69.	Convent of the Holy Angels..	1881	Elem. School	370
	Porto Alegre		Kindergarten	30
	Archdiocese of Porto Alegre			
70.	St. Mary's Orphanage	1888	Orphanage	70
	Porto Alegre		Colored School	120
	Archdiocese of Porto Alegre			
71.	Immac. Concep. Orphanage..	1889	Orphanage	50
	Pelotas		Elem. School	135
	Diocese of Pelotas			
72.	House of Mercy.....	1892	Hospital	5800
	Porto Alegre			
	Archdiocese of Porto Alegre			
73.	College of St. Anthony.....	1898	Boarding School	70
	Estrella		Elem. School	140
	Archdiocese of Porto Alegre			
74.	St. Mary's Hospital..	1900	Hospital	1835
	Pelotas			
	Diocese of Pelotas			
75.	Conv. of Immac. Conception.	1902	Elem. School	145
	Jaguarao			
	Diocese of Pelotas			

*The numbers following the different fields of labor indicate the number of souls cared for by the institution.

No.	Name and Address.	Founded.	Field of Labor.	
76.	Holy Ghost Hospital..... Rio Grande Diocese of Pelotas	1903	Hospital	1700
77.	St. Elizabeth's Hospital..... Sao. Leopoldo Archdiocese of Porto Alegre	1903	Hospital	214
78.	St. Mary's Convent..... Rio Grande Diocese of Pelotas	1903	Elem. School	112
79.	Hospital of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Santa Maria Diocese of Santa Maria	1903	Hospital	718
80.	College of the Holy Ghost... Bage Diocese of Pelotas	1905	Boarding School Elem. School Colored School	70 180 30
81.	College of St. Anne..... Santa Maria Diocese of Santa Maria	1905	Boarding School Elem. School	70 250
82.	College of Our Lady of Good Counsel Porto Alegre Diocese of Porto Alegre	1905	Normal School Elem. School	90 400
83.	St. Sebastian's Hospital..... Bagé Diocese of Pelotas	1906	Hospital	330
84.	St. Joseph's Home..... Pelotas Diocese of Pelotas	1906	Poor House	96
85.	Hospital of the Holy Cross.. Santa Cruz Diocese of Santa Maria	1908	Hospital	162
86.	St. Francis' Hospital..... Jaguarao Diocese of Pelotas	1908	Hospital	110
87.	Military Hospital..... Chrystal, near Porto Alegre Diocese of Porto Alegre	1911	Hospital	700

*The numbers following the different fields of labor indicate the number of souls cared for by the institution.

No.	Name and Address.	Founded.	Field of Labor.	
88.	St. Mary's School..... Porto Alegre Diocese of Porto Alegre	1914	Elem. School	200
89.	Holy Trinity Academy..... Cruz Alta Diocese of Santa Maria	1914	Boarding School Elem. School	23 90
90.	St. Vincent's Orphanage..... Santa Maria Diocese of Santa Maria	1914	Orphanage	26
91.	Holy Redeemer Convent..... Diocese of Porto Alegre	1915	Elem. School	40

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92.	Sacred Heart Convent..... Washington St. Buffalo, N. Y. Diocese of Buffalo	1874	Academy Boarding School Parochial School St. Martha's Home	300 16 326 25
93.	St. Ann's Convent..... Emslie St., Buffalo, N. Y. Diocese of Buffalo	1874	Parochial School Kindergarten	 1513 110
94.	St. Vincent's Orphanage..... Columbus, O. Diocese of Columbus	1875	Orphanage Holy Rosary School	267 215
95.	Sacred Heart Convent..... 4th St., Columbus O. Diocese of Columbus	1875	Parochial School Commercial Dept.	 382 95
96.	St. Aloysius' Academy..... New Lexington, O. Diocese of Columbus	1876	Academy St. Rose's Pa- rochial School	100 168
97.	St. Francis' Mission..... Rosebud Agency, S. Dak. Diocese of Lead	1886	Indian Mission	315
98.	Holy Rosary Mission..... Pine Ridge Agency, S. Dak. Diocese of Lead	1888	Indian Mission	240
99.	St. Peter's Convent..... Milo, Columbus, O. Diocese of Columbus	1899	Parochial School	260

*The numbers following the different fields of labor indicate the number of souls cared for by the institution.

No.	Name and Address.	Founded.	Field of Labor*
100.	St. Mary's Academy..... O'Neill, Neb. Diocese of Omaha	1900	Academy 256 Boarding School 92 Normal School 20
101.	St. Anthony's Convent..... K St., Sacramento, Cal. Diocese of Sacramento	1901	Parochial School 348
102.	St. Joachim's Convent..... Empire St., Buffalo, N. Y. Diocese of Buffalo	1903	Parochial School 295
103.	St. Elizabeth's Convent..... Quarrier St., Charleston, W. Va. Diocese of Wheeling	1903	Parochial School 226 Boarding School 20
104.	St. Leo's Convent.... Hanford St., Columbus, O. Diocese of Columbus	1904	Parochial School 264
105.	St. Stephen's Convent O St., Sacramento, Cal. Diocese of Sacramento	1906	Parochial School 358
106.	St. John's Convent..... Columbus, O. Diocese of Columbus	1906	Parochial School 366
107.	St. Joseph's Convent..... Santee St., Los Angeles, Cal. Diocese of Monterey	1907	Parochial School 500
108.	St. Ann's Convent..... Brydon Rd., Columbus, O. Diocese of Columbus	1908	Infant Asylum 218
109.	Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Convent Stella Niagara, N. Y. Diocese of Buffalo	1908	Novitiate Boarding School 65
110.	St. Agnes Academy..... Alliance, Neb. Diocese of Kearney	1908	Boarding School 80 Day School 230
111.	St. Paul's Convent..... Kenmore, N. Y. Diocese of Buffalo	1910	Parochial School 60
112.	St. Joseph's Hospital..... Alliance, Neb. Diocese of Kearney	1911	Hospital 218

*The numbers following the different fields of labor indicate the number of souls cared for by the institution.

No.	Name and Address.	Founded.	Field of Labor*
113.	St. Mary's Convent..... Cowlitz, Wash. Diocese of Seattle	1911	Boarding School 40 Parochial School 40
114.	St. Anthony's Convent..... Uniontown, Wash Diocese of Spokane	1911	Parochial School 140
115.	Sacred Heart Convent..... Havre, Mont. Diocese of Great Falls	1911	Hospital 480 St. Jude's Pa- rochial School 105
116.	St. Joseph's Convent..... Minot, N. Dak. Diocese of Bismark	1914	Hospital 356
117.	St. Clare's Convent..... Capitol Hill, Portland, Ore. Archdiocese of Portland	1914	Parochial School 40 Ascension School 102
118.	St. Francis' Convent..... Spokane, Wash. Diocese of Spokane	1916	Parochial School 106

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119.	St. Mary's Convent	1904	Hospital 133 High School 50
	Great Windhuk German S. W. Africa		
120.	Little Windhuk	1907	Infant Asylum 37
	German S. W. Africa		
121.	St. Anthony's Hospital	1907	Hospital 74
	Swakopmund		
122.	St. Francis' Mission	1908	Negro Mission 76
	Usakos		

Number of Sisters January 1, 1915:

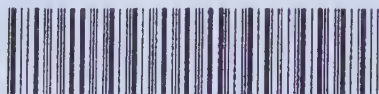
1.	Province of Holland.....a) Holland	729 Sisters
	b) East Indies....	157 Sisters
		886
2.	Province of Germany.....a) Germany	1218 Sisters
	b) Brazil	352 Sisters
	c) United States.	381 Sisters
	d) Africa	22 Sisters
		1973

Total2859

*The numbers following the different fields of labor indicate the number of souls cared for by the institution.



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